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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 603. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 21ST, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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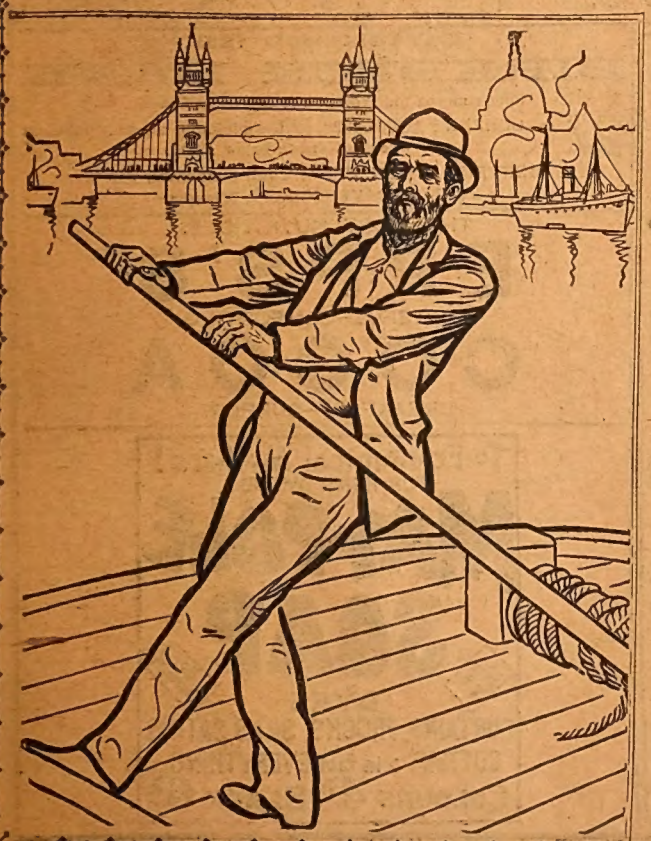

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NEW SERIAL STORY.

A ROMANCE OF LAND AND SEA.

By WILLIAM WESTALL.

Author of "With the Red Eagle," "The Phantom City," "Nigel Fortescue," etc., etc.,

CHAPTER I.

The Starting of the Expedition.

I had read for the twentieth time the letter in which Aramiuta curtly and coldly renounced our engagement and demanded the return of her presents, and was musing bitterly over her treachery and my disillusion, when the door of my room opened, and John Callier, the famous head waiter of Limmli's Hotel, ushered in Dr. Macfarland of "Ours," a dear old friend who had pulled me through after I was so nearly killed at Waterloo.

"You look hipped, Rufus. What's wrong?" he asked kindly, after we had shaken hands.

"Read that," said I, giving him the letter.

"So, she has given you the sack! Well, I am not surprised. I did not like to say so before, but Miss Somerset's not worthy of you, and the time will come when you will deem yourself very lucky in having got rid of her."

"I daresay; in fact, I almost think so now. All the same, it is a beastly unpleasant thing; lets a man down so, and we shall have it in the papers in a day or two."

"There is no denying the unpleasantness. But you will get over it, Rufus, sooner than you think, and before long we shall hear of your betrothal to some young lady——"

"No you won't," I interrupted. "Once bitten, twice shy. I forswear matrimony for ever. I shall never be engaged again."

"Nonsense! A man with your advantages has no right to remain single. Still young, robust, and good-looking, a soldier who distinguished himself at Waterloo, a country gentleman with five thousand a year and a fine old place. You, the last of your race, too! Surely you won't let the old family die out and the estate pass to some distant relative, perhaps an old maid for whom you don't care a fig. You must marry, Rufus. It is your duty."

"I am in no hurry, Mac, and you may be sure of one thing. I shall not marry a fine lady with a false heart. The girl of my choice must be too unsophisticated to be designing, too sincere to be worldly, too good to be untrue, too——"

"Stop, stop! You want an angel, but being a mortal you will have to put up with something less heavenly."

"I can wait, and meanwhile I shall go abroad. I was looking forward to settling in the old home and taking my place in the county. That dream is at an end. I am no more cut out for a hermit than for a man about town. Besides, a change will do me good."

"Where shall you go?"

"To some wild, out-of-the-way country, the wilder the better, provided one can get sport. Bison hunting on the prairies of the Far West, or lion hunting in Africa would suit me equally well. I think I shall toss up—heads, lions; tails, bisons."

"Would not active service suit you better?"

"Decidedly, if I could get it. But people say there will be no more war in Europe for half a century, and for the sake of Europe I hope they are right. They won't let Bonaparte escape a second time, and, as you know, half the army is being disbanded, and the officers put on half-pay."

"I was not thinking of Europe; I was thinking of America."

"Where there?"

"Columbia. Another British legion is being formed to help the patriots in their heroic struggle for liberty. And it is a good cause, Rufus, the cause of freedom and humanity."

"Columbia! Is not that somewhere in Venezuela?"

"The other way about. Columbia includes Venezuela and New Grenada, and is a vast territory, almost as extensive as all Europe."

"Yes, I believe it is a big country, and, strangely enough, I have a sort of hereditary interest in Venezuela, or, at any rate, in the Spanish Main, and that is about the same thing."

"It is the same thing. Some people think that the Spanish Main means salt water, but it does not, it means dry land. And this hereditary interest, how does it arise?"

"Well, towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Gilbert Wyvenhoe, my four times great grandfather, joined a band of adventurers who crossed the sea in two barques, and sailed up the Orinoco in quest of the fabled city of Manoa. After several encounters with the Spaniards, they were obliged to abandon their ships, take to the woods, and make a long march inland. Shortly afterwards my ancestor fell ill, and was left in the care of some friendly Indians, who were very good to him, and with whom he lived till he became almost an Indian himself. In the end, however, they helped him to get down to the sea, and he

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eventually reached England with a whole skin. There is a full account of it all in the muniment room at Wyvenhoe, written by Gilbert himself, together with the names of all his companions. I read it so often when I was a boy that I almost know it off by heart."

"And what became of his companions?"

"Heaven only knows. They either died of hardship and sickness or, more probably, were slaughtered by the Spaniards."

"So that you have no great love for the Spaniards?"

"Not I, indeed; they are a blood-thirsty race, as I had frequent opportunity of seeing when we were campaigning in Spain, and I should be very glad to lend a hand in driving them out of Venezuela. But how is it to be managed? I must have a commission."

"Of course you must, and one at least a step higher than your present rank in the British Army, and I have little doubt that I can get you a majority."

"If you can do that I am your man. But how?"

"Well, I happen to know Don Luis Mendez, the accredited agent of the Venezuelan Government. He has authority to grant commissions to suitable men, and on my recommendation I am sure he will grant you one, especially if you would not mind advancing £500 for the purchase of military stores, to be repaid with interest."

"Oh, hang the interest! I will make the Venezuelan Republic a present of £500. It is not much for a major's commission, and as my marriage has missed fire, I shall have more money than I need. So we may regard the matter as settled. How soon can I start?"

"A ship is being fitted out, the *Campanella*, once a French cruiser, which will convey to Margarita a contingent raised by Major Barnish, formerly of the old 131st, you could go with her. She is expected to sail about the twenty-fifth."

"That will give me just time enough to run down to Wyvenhoe Court, arrange my affairs, and say good-bye to my neighbours and friends. I will give you the cheque now, and if you will kindly do the rest——"

"With pleasure, my dear fellow. I shall send the commission to Wyvenhoe, and when you return you will find everything in order."

And then we parted to part again a fortnight later at Gravesend, where I joined the ship, and whither the doctor and a few other friends had come to see me off.

The *Campanella*, once a French cruiser, was a brig of 500 tons, and carried in her hold sixteen carronades, which were to be brought on deck when we got out to sea. Her commander, Captain Cautley, a brave Irishman, who had served in our Navy, was going out in the hope of obtaining employment under the Venezuelan Government, as he did. He had two hundred troops on board, all of whom had served in the Peninsular War, and were to call at Cork for some two hundred more, all raised, clothed in British uniform and equipped by Major Barnish, who was even a greater enthusiast in the "noble cause of liberty" than Doctor Marfarlane.

On the faith of an undertaking from Don Luis Mendez that the Republic would repay him, with interest, he had put nearly the whole of his fortune into the enterprise. The ship and everything on board had been bought with his money, except some military stores, purchased mostly with my £500.

The major had brought his wife with him, a charming woman several years younger than himself, whose face reminded me of Araminta's, though it showed more character, and she had those sweet Irish eyes, which whether bright with mirth or beaming with love are equally fascinating and equally dangerous.

I had brought with me my old soldier servant, John Ready, a veteran of many campaigns, a fellow full of resource, able to turn his hand to anything and possessing the further qualification of a colloquial knowledge of Spanish, picked up in the Peninsular.

The officers were two captains, Martley and Duckett, and two subalterns, all of whom had seen active service.

At Cork, where we waited a week, the remainder of the contingent came on board, nearly half of whom were in every way equal to those who had embarked in the Thames, but the remainder were a terribly mixed lot and as ignorant of soldiering as so many tailors.

"Never mind," said Barnish, who always made light of difficulties; "we will lick them and the recruits into shape on the voyage."

We had also passengers. At the last moment, when the Blue Peter was flying at the head of our fore-top-gallant mast, there came on board a noble warrior, a portly priest with a rosy face, and a short, broad-set, dark-complexioned man, whose ears were adorned with rings, and whose head was roofed with short black hair, which stood bolt upright, like the bristles on a blacking-brush.

The warrior was long and lanky, his countenance might have served an artist as a model for a caricature of that of the Knight of La Mancha. He sported moustachios, the points of which curled fiercely upwards, and was as gorgeously attired as a French Field-Marshal in full rig, wore high boots and gilt spurs, and, to crown all, carried a birdcage in one hand and led a poodle with the other.

"General Molyneux, of the Venezuelan army, Mr. Conroy, his Excellency's private secretary, and myself, Father Bartrum, his Excellency's private chaplain," announced the priest pompously to the skipper and those of us who happened to be on the poop.

We all bowed profoundly, and Captain Cautley, who, like the rest of us, had much ado to keep his countenance, was about to reply, when Major Barnish appeared.

"Ah! General Molyneux, I presume?" he said. "I am delighted to make your acquaintance, and to have an opportunity of thanking you in person for raising me so fine a contingent, and for all your other kindnesses."

Whereupon the general, having transferred the birdcage to the secretary and the poodle to the priest, shook hands with the major.

"And I, sir, am delighted to make your acquaintance," he answered in a booming bass voice, which, coming from a man so meagre, was rather startling. "Raising recruits for the glorious cause of South American independence has been a work of love for me. They are good men and true, and if you would kindly have them assembled on deck I should like to make the fine fellows a speech. I think they would be encouraged."

"I fear that is not possible just now, general," said Barnish with an amused look at the skipper. "We are just going to sail, the men are below getting their things into shape, the sailors, as you see, are very busy. Otherwise, I should be only too glad to comply with your wish."

"Another time, then. You were good enough to offer me a passage to Venezuela?"

"Certainly," answered the Major politely, albeit with a side glance of dismay; "but as you said nothing further about the matter, we have made no preparations for your reception. All the same, I daresay we can find you quarters."

"That is all I ask, my dear sir, suitable quarters for a gentleman of my rank. Father Bartrum and my private secretary can occupy the same cabin. I am going to Venezuela to confer with my friend, General Bolivar, on the affairs of the Republic, and solicit the command of one of his armies, and if my plans are adopted, as doubtless they will be, we shall make short work of the Spaniards—very short work."

"Of course we shall, but won't you come into my cabin and have some refreshment while your own is being made ready. Will you kindly see to it, Captain Cautley?"

And Major Barnish, followed by the general, the priest with the birdcage, and the secretary with the poodle, disappeared down the main hatchway.

Friendships grow fast on board ship, and I soon grew

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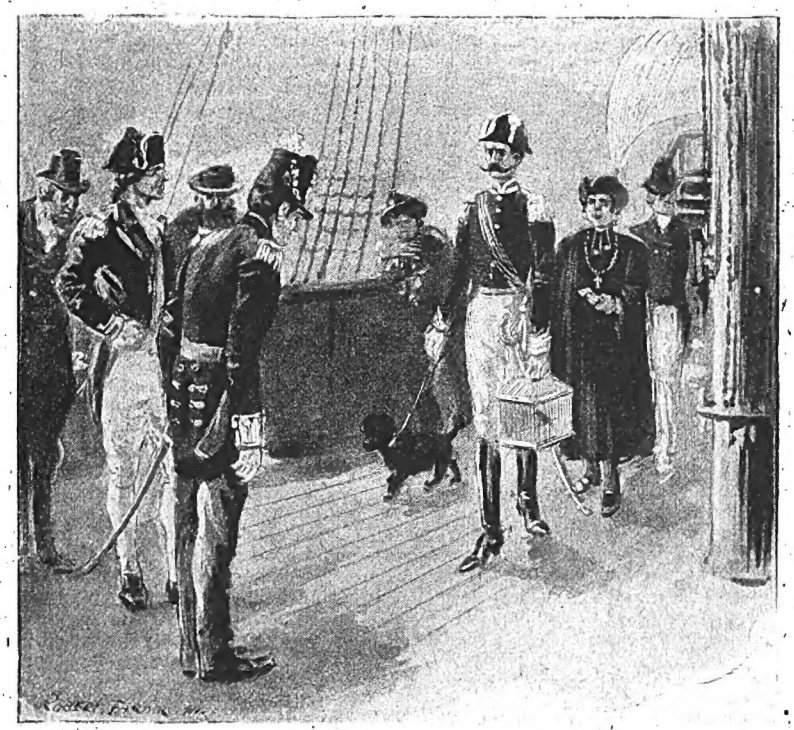
fairly intimate with my brother officers, and especially with Major and Mrs. Barnish, in whose society I spent many pleasant evenings. The amount he had laid out for the Venezuelan Government was greater than I had supposed. Upwards of ten thousand pounds. He had also made himself responsible for the men's pay until they were landed in Venezuela.

CHAPTER II.

RUMOURS OF MUTINY.

WE were now well on our way. The Western Isles had been sighted and passed, the days were delightful, the nights, whether moonlight or starlight, glorious, the winds propitious, the weather perfect, and the *Campanella*, spreading her white wings to the full, speeded swiftly towards the land where, as many of us believed, we should find fortune and fame.

Yet amid all the beauty of sea and sky, the harmony that apparently prevailed among the officers, both naval and military, and the seeming contentment of the troops, there were not wanting signs which made me at times fear that the voyage might end less towardly than it had begun. From John Ready, who had found some old comrades among the men and saw much of them, I gathered that there was a good deal of simmering discontent in the ranks.



The warrior carried a bird cage in one hand and led a poodle with the other.

The men did not like the drills, guard-mounting, keeping watch, and the rest, having, as it seems, expected they would have nothing much to do until we reached our destination but drink rum and bask in the sun, which did not greatly surprise me. Old soldiers are not precisely angels, and the young ones we had taken on board at Cork were utter riff-raff—gaol birds and worse, some of them, John said, who had left Ireland because they had made it too hot to hold them.

All the greater reason for maintaining a stringent discipline and keeping them well employed, and this, as Barnish left a good deal in my hands, I took care to do.

At the same time I told John to keep his eyes open and report—not tittle-tattle or mere talk, but any facts which he thought it behoved me to know.

Not long afterwards he brought a report that gave me great concern and suggested alarming possibilities.

Somebody had told the men that Major Barnish and his officers had no legal authority over them whatever, and that there was no reason why they should obey orders, undergo drill, submit to punishment, or do aught they did not like to do. Nor was this the worst. Two subalterns, Price and Bryan, who had received their appointments from General Molyneux, were making common cause with the disaffected among the men, and the chief promoter of sedition was his private secretary.

These were grave tidings, and had we been on service and Major Barnish my superior officer, I should have reported them to him without either hesitation or delay. But we were not on active service and he was not my superior officer. I was not even his guest, for when I learnt that he had fitted out and provisioned the *Campanella* at his own expense I insisted on paying my fare.

He commanded the battalion because he had raised it, I asked for a post because I wanted occupation, and he had made me his acting adjutant because he was not much of an organiser and had no great liking for work.

For these reasons I thought I had a discretion in the matter, and in the exercise of that discretion I decided not to tell Barnish, for the present, what I had heard.

Yet if I had thought the danger imminent, and prompt action necessary, I should have told him. But for the present, at least, I had no apprehension of concerted action amongst the men, much less open mutiny. If Ready's information were correct, they would not make a general move until the malcontents had succeeded in winning over the others.

This would take time, and as every day brought us nearer to our journey's end a day saved was a day gained. Individual acts of insubordination were, however, quite possible, and I expected that on some such occasion the offender would be backed by his comrades when, unless we were well prepared and supported by the main body of the battalion, our authority would end and anarchy begin.

In any event I did not intend to yield without a struggle, and presently found that others were of my way of thinking. For after further reflection I resolved to impart (under a pledge of secrecy) my apprehensions to the three captains, Cautley, Martley and Duckett, which I did one evening in the skipper's room.

"I guessed there was something in the wind from what my boy and the bo'sun told me," said Cautley, as he lighted another cigar.

"And I smelt a rat from what my fellow told me," observed Martley, who had been waiting to hear what the skipper said, before committing himself to an opinion.

"So did I, from what my man told me," echoed Duckett, who always took his cue from Martley.

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"Well, now that the matter has been mooted, and we know pretty well how the land lies, what do you think of it all?" I asked, addressing the company in general, but Cautley in particular, who, besides being the skipper, was the oldest man present, though still under thirty and he had sailed the seas since he was thirteen.

"What do I think of it all?" he repeated. "What do I think of it? I think that if you soldier officers cannot keep your men in order we shall be in a dickens of a mess."

"Of course we shall," I answered curtly, for I felt nettled at so inconclusive a reply. "It is for that reason that I have brought the matter to your notice, and being now fully alive to the danger, it behoves us to devise a way of preventing it, if we can, or of meeting it if we cannot."

"Right you are, and the question is: What shall we do to prevent this mutiny from coming off, or, failing therein, crush it when it does come off? What say you, Captain Martley?"

"Find out who are the ringleaders, give each of them a good dose of the cat, and put 'em in irons till we get to Margarita."

"I suppose that is also your opinion, Captain Duckett?"

"It is, sir; it is the conclusion we came to when we first smelt a rat."

"And a very natural conclusion, though, I fear. However, Major Wyvenhoe having heard what his brother officers think, will perhaps give us the benefit of his opinion."

I said that in my opinion flogging would be madness, and that we could not do better than go on exactly as we were doing, getting all the information we possibly could and keeping a sharp look out for the first symptoms of an outbreak, yet acting before the men as though we suspected nothing.

"So as throw them off their guard? So far good. Anything else?"

"The magazine should be guarded. Can you put two of your sailors there?"

"Certainly. Only when all hands are piped on deck you will have to provide substitutes from your soldier men, a good many of whom must still be trustworthy. You should also post a sentry at the spirit room, it will be one of the first objects of attack if your fellows get out of hand. And how about the small arms? They are racked between decks at present, I think, those that are not in store?"

"Yes, and easily accessible as well by night as day."

"That won't do. Keep them in the cuddy. I will tell the carpenter to put up racks for them. I shall easily find an excuse."

"The orders are 'as we were,' then, major?" said Martley rising.

"Yes, the word for the present is wait and watch. If you hear anything particular don't fail to mention it to me or the skipper."

"Of course. Come along Duckett, we are due for that game of whist in Walker's den. Good evening, gentlemen."

"They won't set the Thames on fire, those two," observed Cautley with an amused smile when the two captains were gone.

"Well, they are not men of many words, nor is the little they do say of much value, but they are decent fellows for all that, and may be trusted to keep their word and do their duty, which is a good deal."

"Gad, it's everything. Almost sums up the law and the prophets. If everybody did his duty and kept his word, this would be a better world and we should be spared this bother, which is likely to be more serious than you suspect, major."

"Do you think so? How?"

"Well, if my intelligence be correct, there is a plot afoot to seize the ship."

"By whom?"

"Your soldier men; but the conspiracy is being hatched among the convicts from Cork, as I call them. The others are thinking of nothing more heinous than refusing to be paraded and drilled, and leading an idle life till we get to Margarita; but the Corkers want the ship."

"To what end?"

"That, as yet, is a mystery, and the only thing that makes me doubt the accuracy of my information. I should have thought it would be enough for these fellows to seize the spirit room. If they got the ship I don't see what they could do with her. There is no port into which they could take her without the certainty of being detected and detained by the authorities."

"How do you know that a plot is being hatched? Is it a matter of evidence or inference?"

"Both, or perhaps it would be more right to say my own inference from Carol's evidence."

"That's the boatswain."

"Yes, some time after we called at Cork he spotted among the convicts an old chum of the name of Mellican, though it used to be Flanagan. Carol says he is a fair sample of the bulk, which means, I take it, a frightful ruffian. At first the bo'sun fought shy of him; but hearing or guessing that mischief was brewing, he spoke to me, and I encouraged him to cultivate the fellow's acquaintance. This he has done, and it is from that source I have heard of this plot. Full particulars are as yet to seek; but Mellican, *alias* Flanagan, has agreed to act as spy—of course, for a consideration—and report to me regularly through Carol."

"So in a day or two you may be able to lay your hand on the culprits?"

"Yes, and though risky, it will perhaps be the best thing to lay them by the heels, quietly and at night. But we should have to tell Barnish first, and I think on the whole we had better."

"There I agree with you. So long as it is a case of suspicion and hearsay we may keep our own council, but if we get positive information it would not be right to keep it from the man whom it most concerns. When will Carol see this fellow again?"

"I am going to see him myself as soon as we can arrange an interview, we are to meet in the bo'sun's cabin to-morrow night, time not yet fixed, but probably during the morning watch."

On which, all having been said that, for the moment, could be said, I went on deck.

It was a superb night. In the purple sky, unflecked by a single cloud, hung a great yellow moon; there was barely enough wind to give the ship steering way; golden-hued wavelets lapped lazily against her sides, and her wake was marked by a long streak of phosphorescent foam. And the pleasantness of the evening was enhanced by music. Some of the buglers had been practising the calls, and presently one of them, an excellent performer, played several lively airs on the key bugle, another followed suit with a clarionet, and when he had done a man with a rich baritone voice gave "Oh, list, ye landsmen, list."

"Quite a musical evening, Major Wyvenhoe," said a low, sweet voice behind me, made all the more melodious by a slight touch of the brogue.

"And a very delightful evening otherwise, Mrs. Barnish," I answered, turning away from the taffrail over which I had been leaning.

"You are right. Nothing could be more delightful, the weather is simply perfect."

"For enjoyment, unquestionably, but I fancy your husband and Captain Cautley would like to be going through the water a little faster. I don't suppose we are making more than two knots an hour."

"The ship is going quite fast enough for me."

"For me, also. I don't think we shall find better quarters ashore."

"How very matter-of-fact you are! I was thinking of separation, not of quarters, of the time now not far off, when I shall have to part with my husband and the kind friends we have made on board the *Campanella*."

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"Yes, it will be very sad, and I, for one, shall be very sorry."

"But you are going on a glorious service, to help these brave Venezuelans in their struggle for liberty. Your lives will be full of excitement and glory, while I shall be eating my heart away in solitude and suspense, and nobody will so much as give me a thought, except, perhaps, Alfred—occasionally," and she sighed deeply.

"You are quite mistaken Mrs. Barnish, I am sure we shall all think of you and of the pleasant time we had on board the *Campanella*. Where do you propose to pass your time while we are campaigning?"

"At Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, which I believe is easily accessible from Margarita. Do you think we shall get there easily?"

"Why not? The first part of the voyage is accomplished, and we shall soon be in the Caribbean sea, which is said to be as calm as a lake—barring hurricanes."

"That is barring a good deal, isn't it?" said Mrs. Barnish, laughing. "I was not thinking of storms and tempests, I was thinking of the danger of being captured, a danger which, as we approach the Main, is more likely to increase than diminish. It must be a danger, or the underwriters would not have refused to insure the ship against capture."

"On the ground that she carries contraband of war?"

"Yes, I believe that was their reason."

"Well, considering that the *Campanella's* cargo consists almost exclusively of contraband, I fear that if we were boarded and overhauled by a Spanish cruiser, it might be rather awkward."

"For us it would be more than awkward, Major Wyvenhoe. The *Campanella* carries both my husband's fortune and my dowry. The ship and cargo would be confiscated, and we should be ruined."

"No fear of that, Mrs. Barnish. Captain Cautley is too smart a sailor to let himself be caught, and if it were by any chance to come to a fight it is not the *Campanella* that would get the worst of it. For the rest, I have not the least doubt that the voyage will end as happily as it has begun."

"I am glad to hear you say so, very glad," quoth the lady earnestly. "True, my husband has said the same; but he is so very sanguine, and laughs at my forebodings. However, you are a man of sober judgment, and I gladly take your word for it that all will be well."

This was putting it rather more strongly than I liked, and I foresaw that when she was informed, as within forty-eight hours she almost certainly would be, of the danger by which we were even then threatened, I should find it difficult to reconcile my assurances with the facts, and she might think I had been intentionally deceiving her. But on the principle of *qui s'excuse s'accuse* I said no more, and reflected that a great deal may happen in forty-eight hours.

As to which I was quite right, the next day being one of the most eventful of my life. It began with a tragedy so sudden and appalling that even yet, though so many years have gone by, I cannot think of it without a shudder.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEATH OF MAJOR BARNISH.

THE morning was as fair as the evening had been, and a freshening of the breeze made it all the more bracing and enjoyable. When I went on deck the sun had just risen, and the *Campanella* with a full spread of canvas was sailing swiftly over a rosy sea. On the poop I found the skipper, and we were presently joined by Barnish, Martley, Duckett, and Haines, the senior surgeon.

"The top o' the morning to you," said Barnish merrily, "Begad! I like this. We are getting over the ground at last, Cautley?"

"Yes, sir; this is a great improvement on yesterday."

"Or any other for some time. What is she doing? Five knots?"

"More; six, at least."

"Capital! If this wind holds good, we shall be at Margarita—when?"

"In ten or twelve days."

"Good! Make it ten, and I'll give you fellows a champagne breakfast. I say, skipper, get the carronades up; they may come in useful before we get to Margarita."

"It shall be done to-day, sir."

"You are not smoking, Wyvenhoe. Won't you have a whiff?" (offering me his cigar-case.)

"Thank you. I don't generally smoke before eating, but it is impossible to refuse one of your exquisite damas."

I took a cigar, lighted it from the Major's, and was in the act of returning it to him when a piercing cry rang out from aloft, "For Heaven's sake, look out," and at the same moment a great block, let fall by carelessness or mischance, descended on Barnish's head, crushing it like an eggshell, and without a groan or an exclamation he fell dead at our feet.

"My husband, my husband!" she moaned, and fell fainting into my arms.

For a few seconds we stood silent and motionless, blanched and paralysed by this sudden extinction of so bright a life.

Doctor Haines was the first to speak.

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I whipped out my sword and let the fellow have the point in his throat.

"The head is crushed into a shapeless mass, every feature of the face obliterated," he said, stooping. "Let us cover him up and take him away."

At a sign from Cautley two of the sailors brought one of the ship's ensigns and wound it round the body.

"Poor Mrs. Barnish! Who will tell her?" asked Cautley.

Nobody volunteered. As for myself, I would rather have led a forlorn hope.

"Good Heavens! She is there—coming up the companion ladder," exclaimed Haines.

It was only too true, coming as she thought to join her husband, and there would be no possibility of breaking the news gently, or hiding the fatal truth from her until the body could be removed.

The poor woman saw, at a glance that something was wrong. Our faces would have betrayed us, even had there been no other sign.

"What is the matter? Where is Major Barnish? I thought he was with you. I am sure I heard him laughing, and then there was a strange cry——"

"For Heaven's sake don't come this way, madam," said Cautley in a voice hoarse with emotion.

"Why not? I shall. Where is Alfred? What is there under that flag? I insist on knowing," and she was springing forward to raise it when I interposed between her and what had been her husband.

"Don't, for Heaven's sake and your own peace of mind, don't," I entreated. "There has been a terrible accident."

"And Alfred is killed. No, I don't believe it. It is impossible—let me see him, let me see him."

"I dare not. You would never forgive me. His head has been crushed by a falling block, and the sight——"

"My husband, my husband! Heaven help me!" she moaned and fell fainting into my arms.

The skipper and myself carried her to the cabin and left her to the care of her maid. We would gladly have tried to console the poor lady, but knew not what to say, and in the presence of so dire a calamity mere words had been as idle wind. Moreover, it behoved us to take immediate action for the protection of her property and life and our own lives.

The Major's death was the worst thing that could have happened. It left the expedition without a chief and the troops without a commander, for my deputed authority ceased when the chief died. Cautley held his appointment only during Barnish's pleasure, though he would doubtless continue to act, and nobody competent to take his place was likely to dispute his supremacy. But that if I attempted to retain my position I should meet with opposition I had no more doubt than that if I did not retain it the ship would become a floating Hades, whether the men mutinied or not.

The skipper took me aside.

"The crisis has come," he said. "Poor Barnish's death gives the plotters and malcontents a chance they are sure not to miss. I wish to goodness we had a couple of carronades on the quarter-deck. But we must do what we can. The muskets are in the cuddy, and I will have the cutlasses brought aft, you had better treble the guard over the magazine if you can find the right sort of men."

This, with the help of John Ready and a sergeant, who had served in my old regiment, I straightway did.

Meanwhile, the portentous news had spread like wildfire. Most of the officers had gathered aft, groups of men were talking excitedly in the waist and on the forecastle, others moving about, some even making as though they would invade the quarter-deck.

"We must stop this," said Cautley. "Tell the bo'sun to pipe all hands on deck, Mr. Fritt."

Cautley was right. It was time to act, and thinking it would be a great help to have Mrs. Barnish's moral support, yet not liking to leave my post, I asked Dr. Hawkins to see her, inquire how she was, explain to her, if she were in a condition to listen, with how grave an emergency we were confronted, ask whether she would like the voyage to be continued, and the ship to remain under Captain Cautley's command and the troops to be placed under mine, or that of some other officer.

The doctor went at once, and to my surprise, in a few minutes returned with Mrs. Barnish on his arm. Though deathly pale, she stepped firmly and held her head high; only her twitching lips and burning eyes showed how deeply she was moved.

All the men who were aft uncovered.

"Gentlemen," she began, addressing the group on the quarter-deck, "I am come, and Heaven only knows how much the effort has cost me, to say that I should like the ship to proceed to Margarita, exactly as she would have done had this dreadful misfortune not happened. I desire Captain Cautley, who has done so well, to retain command of the ship, and Major Wyvenhoe, who is now the senior military officer on board, to take command of the troops, and I hope, gentlemen, you will all stand by me (here she gave a little gasp) as you would have stood by him."

"Please Heaven, we will," answered Cautley, and few were they who heard her that did not say or feel the same.

"Thank you, oh so much," she said in a broken voice, and then taking Dr. Hawkins's arm, returned to the cabin.

"Pass the word to sound the assembly. To your stations, gentlemen, I ordered."

"Sir, Captain Cautley, I protest against this proceeding," exclaimed Molyneux angrily, who had just come on deck. "I am the senior military officer on board, and by virtue of the rank I hold in the army of the Venezuelan Republic, I claim the right to command the troops."

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"I don't know anything about your rank in the Venezuelan Army, Mr. Molyneux, but I know that I am the master of this ship, and that you are only a passenger," retorted the skipper, "and by Heaven, sir, if you don't stop your jaw and mind your business I will have you put in irons and locked up."

On which the general fell back; but I was sorry to see that the men were not falling in, and being openly encouraged in their disobedience by several subalterns and non-commissioned officers. The baser part of the Irish contingent were arming themselves with belaying-pins and whatever came handy, and some were flourishing pistols about—how obtained I had no idea.

Just then Ready brought my sword and pistols.

"Is the magazine safe, John?" I asked him.

"Yes, sir. Sergeant York is there with six true men, who will hold the post to the last."

"And we shall hold the ship to the last," said Cautley. "Get our men together and serve out the cutlasses and muskets, Mr. Pritt, and send somebody for my pistols and get your own."

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF THE MUTINY.

THOUGH most of the troops were in open mutiny and greatly excited, there had been as yet no actual violence, partly, perhaps, because they possessed no more effective weapons than belaying pins, boats' stretchers, marline spikes, knives, and a few pistols. They were also aware that any attempt to seize the ship would be resisted to the last, and that as the sailors and officers on the poop, and in front of the cuddy, were armed to the teeth the attempt might fail, and they did not know, fortunately for us, that we had no ammunition, except for the pistols.

The skipper, not anticipating an immediate outbreak, and thinking that in any event we should have at least a few hours for preparation had sent all the cartridges to the magazine, down in the forehold, whence a supply could not be obtained without the knowledge of the mutineers. Moreover, the mere attempt, by enlightening the mutineers as to our true position would probably encourage them to make an immediate attack, and in a hand to hand conflict we should probably come off second best.

The skipper was very angry with himself, as I thought, needlessly. Nobody could have foreseen poor Barnish's death, and in two or three days our preparations would have been complete.

"I never made such a mistake in my life," quoth Cautley bitterly. "I might have kept a few hundred cartridges within reach, just on the off chance of something happening; however, we must make the best of it. Your plan cannot be carried out, what next? Shall we charge right into the thick of the ruffians and make an end of it one way or another? If they have the advantage of numbers, we have the advantage of weapons, though we do lack cartridges, and I fancy a good many of them would be unwilling combatants."

My plan had been to make an energetic appeal to the mutineers to return to their duty, threatening, if they refused, to fire into them, and in the event of their remaining obdurate, doing so without further warning. We were nearly fifty strong, and having an abundance of muskets, could have given them two volleys in as many minutes, quite enough, as I thought, to bring them to their senses.

But we had no ammunition.

"I shall try my plan, all the same—as far as it will go," I said in answer to Cautley. "They don't know we are without cartridges."

"But you cannot make them hear from the poop, there is too much noise; besides, they won't listen. They would not listen to Martley and the others just now."

"I shall go right amongst them. Some, at least, will listen to reason."

"Alone?"

"John Ready will go with me. He knows a good many of the Englishmen, and may be able to influence them."

"Well, it is, perhaps, the best. A bold course generally is. If you get into a difficulty, we will come to your help. If you fall, avenge you. But keep a sharp look out, or some of those wild Irishmen will be having a knife into you before you know where you are."

With this ominous warning ringing in my ears I went down the companion-ladder, followed by John Ready.

The troops were all over the deck, from the break of the poop to the bows, some haranguing each other, some brandishing belaying pins and boats' stretchers and calling on their comrades to "come on," and behaving so like lunatics that I felt sure they were drunk, while others, mostly the older men, were exchanging views without working themselves into a delirium of excitement.

Rather to my surprise I was neither molested nor insulted perhaps because, though fully aware of the perilous nature of my undertaking, I succeeded in my endeavour not to look afraid.

"Let us make for that group before the mainmast," said

The mutineers desperately fighting, were driven aft and there cornered.

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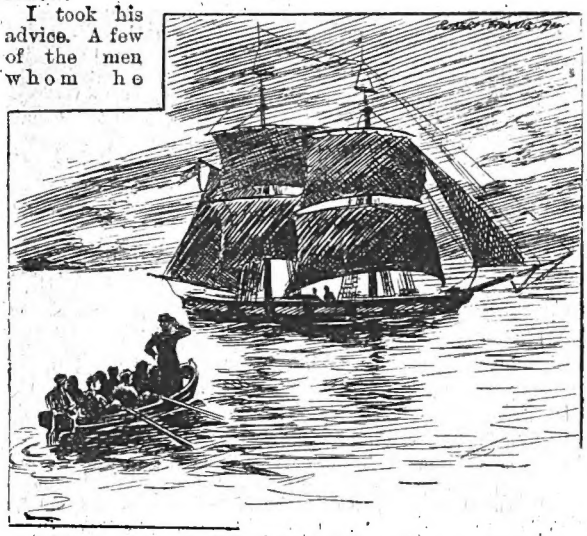
John. "I know them all well, they are good fellows at the bottom, and if we can get them on our side the others will follow."

I took his advice. A few of the men whom he pointed out I knew personally, two had served in my regiment in the Peninsular.



"What ship is that?" demanded the officer in command of the boat.

"What is all this about? I never expected to find you taking part in a mutiny, Higgins," I said to one of them.

"No more I am, Major," answered the man. "Till we are mustered into the Venezuelan service, and take the oath, we are civilians and under no obligation to obey."

"Who says so?"

"They are all saying so, and it stands to reason. A recruit at home does not become a soldier till he has passed the doctor and been sworn in before the beak."

"That may be. But you cannot deny that when you engaged with Major Barnish and took his money, you became his man, and are bound in honour to obey his orders and the orders of those he set over you."

"But you see, sir, the Major being dead, cannot give no orders, and his death breaks the contract, doesn't it? Anyway, we have been told so. Besides, it stands to reason."

I rather thought it did, and feeling that Higgins (who had evidently been well coached) was getting the best of the argument, fell back on sentiment.

"Yes, the Major is dead, most unfortunately for us all, but Mrs. Barnish is alive, and as his representative, claims your obedience, and has undertaken to carry out the contract, and do all he promised to do. If you men refuse to fulfil your part of it, she will be ruined, and I am sure you don't want that."

"Poor lady! No, indeed! We are all very sorry for her and don't want to give her no trouble. But how about that sovereign?"

"What sovereign?"

"Well, the major gave us so much bounty and a kit before we embarked, and promised us a sovereign more when we reached port. Now, are we going to get it?"

"That's it. Are we going to get it?" broke in several of them with great eagerness.

This was news to me, and I doubted Mrs. Barnish's ability to make good this part of her late husband's engagement, for it was hardly to be expected that she would obtain an immediate settlement of her claims on the Venezuelan Government. On the other hand, it was clear that without some satisfactory assurance about "that sovereign" the men would not return to their duty.

"Are we going to get it?" repeated several of them.

"Not unless you behave better and make less noise. I know that Mrs. Barnish means to keep every promise made by her husband, but as you seem to have some doubt about it, I will take this liability on myself. That is to say, I undertake to pay every man of you who returns to his duty one sovereign, or its equivalent in Venezeulan money, within an hour of our arrival in port."

"That is very handsome of you, Major Wyvenhoe, and all we want," returned Higgins respectfully, "and I think you may take it that all the men who embarked in London will accept your offer and return to their duty. Am I right?" (turning to his comrades).

"Right you are, Higgins," answered most of them, and none dissented.

"But I speak only for ourselves," he added, "though I have no doubt a good many of the Irishmen will follow our example. At any rate the best of them will?"

"Oh, will they?" shouted a half-drunken ragamuffin at the edge of the crowd, which had greatly increased during my colloquy with Higgins. "A sovereign apiece when we can have the whole ship. Sure, if the Major is able to give us a sovereign apiece when we reach port he has got the money now, and we can have it for the taking. Hit 'um on the head, boys."

And with that the ruffian thrust himself through the press and aimed a blow at me with a boats' stretcher which, had it not been warded off by John Ready, would have taken effect. Seeing that this was part of a preconcerted movement, I whipped out my sword, and let the fellow have the point in his throat, at the same time calling on the Englishmen to stand by me and close their ranks. While we were talking the blackguard section had got between us and the poop, and on hearing that I had prevailed on some of the rebels to return to their duty, made a desperate effort to disperse my supporters and extinguish me. But the Englishmen responded nobly to my call. Those of them who had no weapons used their belts, and all went at it, hammer and tongs, in a fashion which must have been very like a faction fight at Donnybrook fair. Others, attracted by the row, rushed to the spot, some taking one side, some the other, and the action became general, though many of the combatants had not the least idea what it was all about.

It was a contest with blunt weapons at close quarters, in which weight counted for more than valour, and being the weaker in numbers we were gradually pushed towards the bows, and the mutineers were shouting: "Chuck them overboard, throw them into the water," when a diversion was effected in our favour which turned the tide of battle and eventually gave us the victory.

Cautley, Martley, and the other officers, seeing our danger, and calling on the blue-jackets to follow them, charged, and thanks to the superiority of their weapons and the vigour of their attack, succeeded in joining their strength to ours. Moreover, we were presently reinforced by nearly all the remaining Englishmen, and many of the Irishmen, who, having heard of my offer or perceiving that the game was up, had decided to return to their allegiance.

This gave us the advantage. The mutineers, desperately fighting, were driven aft and there cornered. Not beaten, however, for a summons to surrender called forth only an angry refusal and an outburst of profane swearing, and (as we had emptied our pistols) it seemed as though there was nothing for it but to finish the contest with cold steel and such other weapons as we possessed.

"Very well, we will hold you here until we can get up a lot of cartridges from the magazine, then shoot you like dogs and throw your carcases to the sharks," said Cautley in a voice that could be heard by all.

On this the mutineers began to waver.

"What terms will you give us?" asked one of them.

"The ringleaders, including the subalterns and non-commissioned officers who have been false to their trust will

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be put in irons, the others confined to the lower deck pending an investigation," answered Cautley, after a word with me.

I thought this was treating them leniently, far more leniently than they deserved, but they did not seem to think so, declaring that unless we granted them a free pardon, without exceptions, they would fight to the last.

"That is impossible," I said.

"Of course it is, we might as well give them the ship," added Cautley. "Well, there is nothing for it but to shoot 'em all. I shall be sorry to do it, but until order is restored, the service of the ship cannot be carried on, and if anything were to happen, all our lives——"

"A sail on the starboard bow!" shouted a sailor from the foretop.

"Gad! I believe she is a man-of-war!" exclaimed Cautley, examining her through his glass. "Now look here, you mutinous rascals. Your attempt to take this vessel was an act of piracy, punishable with death. If that ship is not a man-of-war I never saw one, and unless you submit instantly, I'll bear up to her, have you tried by court-martial right away and hanged."

While the decks were being cleared and matters put to rights the skipper was watching the strange sail, which had been on a course almost parallel with ours, but was now edging towards us.

"A man-of-war beyond a doubt, but, I fear, not a British man-of-war," said he.

"What then?"

"May be a Spaniard, though I hope not."

"But England and Spain are at peace. She would not molest us on the high seas."

"She might board and search us."

"But would that be legal?"

"Well, we stopped and searched neutrals on the high seas in the last war, though I believe it is beginning to be regarded as a violation of international law. But the worst of it is that we are breaking international law by carrying contraband of war and soldiers for service in Venezuela, and if we are taken we shall have to take the consequences."

"One of which would be Mrs. Barnish's ruin."

"None of us would come off with flying colours. At the best, we should be shoved ashore and left to get home—or anywhere else, as we could; at the worst, lodged in some pestiferous gaol till the case was disposed of, which, for most of us, would mean yellow fever and death."

"A pleasant prospect. But cannot we escape?"

"You mean show her a clean pair of heels? I wish we could. But look," handing me his glass, "we have every stitch of canvas spread, while the Spaniard—if she be a Spaniard, as to which I have little doubt—is overhauling us under double-reefed topsails. If we escape, major, it will have to be by stratagem, not by speed. Just let me have another squint. Ah! there goes the blood-red flag of Spain, and she has altered her course a point. The next thing will be a shot across our bows as a hint to heave to. We must take that ship, my friend. There is nothing for it but being taken ourselves, which is out of the question."

This proposal was so astounding and, seemingly, so absurd, that had not Cautley been one of the most pert and clear-headed men I knew I should have deemed him either mad or drunk.

"Take that ship! What on earth are you thinking about? She must have——"

"Thirty guns, judging from the size of her."

"And we have not one, mounted."

"And if we had all our guns mounted we should not be a match for her. I have not men enough both to sail the *Campanella* and fight her. Besides, they have had no training, and yours would be of no use except for boarding."

"How the dickens do you propose to take this Spaniard, then?"

"By stratagem."

"And what will you do with her when you have got her?"

"Leave her. But listen; time presses, we have not a minute to lose."

When the skipper had explained his plan, to which I gave my cordial assent, I passed the word to sound the assembly, and in a few minutes all the troops, except the few who were unfit for duty and the mutineers, had come on deck and fallen in.

"Now, men, you have an opportunity of atoning for your misconduct, also of doing yourselves and everybody on board a good turn," I began. "That man-of-war is a Spanish ship, Captain Cautley thinks from her ways that she is going to overhaul us, and as she is faster than the *Campanella* we cannot shake her off, and having no guns we cannot fight her, even if it were desirable to do so, which for several good reasons it is not. On the other hand, if the Spanish captain makes us heave to, boards us, examines our papers and searches the ship, he will find that we are carrying contraband of war, and we shall be made prisoners, taken Heaven knows where, and put in gaol, perhaps worse.

"As soon as you are dismissed you will go below and receive your arms; the boarding-party cutlasses and pistols, the reserve muskets. For the rest, you must obey your officers' orders, to whom I shall presently give full instructions, to the letter. But there are two things I want particularly to impress on you. Until the signal is given not a man, officer or private, must come on deck without a direct order from me, and after the order is given for silence not a word must be spoken. This is of the utmost importance, for some of the Spaniards are almost sure to board us, and if they suspect that we have troops on board

General Molyneux ran an unfortunate sailor from back to breast.

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all our trouble will go for nothing, and we shall either have to surrender or be blown out of the water.

"Captain Cautley will find a pretext to lay the *Campanella* alongside the Spanish ship, and the signal for boarding will be the bo'sun's whistle 'all hands,' and as the Spaniards are not likely to be either armed or prepared we shall have no difficulty in mastering them. Threaten as much as you like, but use neither your cutlasses nor pistols except strictly in self-defence. Great Britain and Spain are at peace, and we are under the British flag. All we want is to restrain the Spaniards while the bluejackets make it impossible for them to molest us. To do more would be piracy, which is a hanging matter. Now you can fall out."

After a few words with my officers I went below and entered my instructions in the order book.

Then I went on deck again.

The man-of-war was bearing up to us.

"Didn't I tell you so?" exclaimed Cautley as a shot flew across our bows. "The order to heave-to. I shall obey, of course."

The man-of-war also hove-to, and presently a boat was lowered. I had already passed the word for silence, and told the officers to enforce it by every means in their power.

"You must stand by me to interpret," said the skipper. "I know a few words of Spanish but not enough to hold a conversation."

"What ship is that?" demanded the officer in command of the boat when he came within hail.

"The *Campanella*, of London, bound for Port of Spain," I answered for Cautley, Port of Spain being our alternative destination.

"I should like to come on board."

"Come by all means. Captain Cautley will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

The quarter-ladder was lowered and the officer mounted the ship's side. Others were preparing to follow him, when Cautley intervened.

"Only one, if you please. I am not going to have a whole boat's crew on board my ship. Well, Señor, what can I have the pleasure of doing for you? But you will, perhaps, kindly tell me the name of your ship and your own."

"*Con mucho gusto.* My ship is the *Dulcinea*, of the Royal Spanish Navy, and I am Guzman Zambrun, her first-lieutenant. Now be good enough to tell me of what consists your cargo."

"Hardware and sundries."

"You are pleased to say so. But it is not enough. I must see your papers."

"What for?"

"In order that I may ascertain whether you are carrying contraband of war. I also require to inspect your cargo."

"By what right?"

"The right of search. But I am not here to bandy words. I am here by command of my captain, Señor Don Pablo Blanco, with orders from him to examine your papers and inspect your cargo."

"Will you kindly tell Señor Don Pablo Blanco that I respectfully decline to allow you to do either the one or the other."

"I shall convey your message, of course, but Don Pablo is a very resolute gentleman, and you are under our guns."

"You will fire on us at your peril. We are not in Spanish waters, and you cannot blockade the ocean."

"I have no more to say, Señor Capitan, except that if you attempt to make sail Don Pablo will most certainly fire on you."

The lieutenant made his bow, turned on his heel, and was going over the side when Cautley, as though the idea had only just occurred to him, said, or rather I said for him (the comedy having previously been rehearsed):

"One word, Señor Teniente. I don't want to give you unnecessary trouble, and if you have no objection I will lay my ship alongside yours and have a few words with Don Pablo. I cannot admit his right to search me, but I might receive him as a guest, and, as a concession to him personally, allow him and yourself to see my papers and look round the ship."

"That is all we want," exclaimed the lieutenant eagerly. "I am greatly obliged for your courtesy, and I have not the least doubt that Don Pablo will accept your proposition, in which case we shall hoist the British ensign as a token of assent."

As soon as the Spaniards were well away, I ordered fifty men to come on deck and lie close to the bulwarks.

Five minutes after the lieutenant put his foot on the *Dulcinea's* deck the Union Jack was flying over her stern, whereupon the *Campanella*, which had the weather gage, bore down on her and brought to under her counter.

The Spaniards threw ropes, and, as they were being made fast to, the boatswain, at a sign from the captain, whistled "all hands," and in almost less time than it takes to tell, three hundred men swarmed on deck, and led by Cautley, myself, and the fifty who had been hidden, sprang over the *Dulcinea's* bulwarks.

The Spaniards, unarmed, unprepared, and outnumbered, offered hardly any resistance. Some of them ran to the capstan to get cutlasses, but this having been foreseen, our fellows were there before them. Others went below, for arms, on which we battened down the hatches.

All was going on well, our men, as they had been ordered, used no more violence than was absolutely necessary, and the Spaniards were being driven aft like a flock of sheep, when General Molyneux appeared, flourishing his sword and crying "Death to the Spaniards!" and ran an unfortunate sailor from back to breast, killing him instantly.

Señor Don Pablo Blanco and his first-lieutenant were very indignant, accused us of treachery, and threatened to have us hanged for piracy.

"You will have to catch us first," I said. "If you had not meddled with us we should not have meddled with you, and we are neither going to hurt you nor rob you, only to put the *Dulcinea* in such a condition as to prevent you from making sail before sunset."

"You mean that you will disable my ship. How can you do that without hurting us?" retorted Don Pablo fiercely. "If bad weather comes on it may cost us our lives. And what do you call killing defenceless men? I call it murder."

"So do I, and we regret the occurrence exceedingly," I answered, after a word aside with Cautley. "We cannot restore the poor fellow to life, but we will leave the perpetrator of the outrage to be dealt with as you think fit."

"I do not thank you, Señor, because it is the least you can do. The ruffian shall be treated as he deserves. I only wish I had it in my power to treat you all as you deserve."

When General Molyneux found that he was going to be left behind he made a great uproar, cursing and praying in turn, and struggling desperately with the Spanish sailors who, heedless of his cries, carried him below.

"Did you ever see a man hanged?" asked Cautley.

"Never."

"Well, if you take my glass and keep an eye on the *Dulcinea*, I think you will presently see somebody you know strung up to the fore yard-arm, and he will be rightly served."

"Yes, killing that Spanish sailor was sheer murder."

"And may get us into trouble later on. Nor is that all. Now that he is gone, and the mutineers are laid by the heels, we shall learn all about the plot, and unless I am mistaken—— But I won't move in the matter until after the funeral. The carpenter is making a coffin, and to-night we shall consign poor Barnish to his watery grave."

"Won't that be rather soon?"

"Not for these latitudes. The weather is very warm, and below it is very close, and sailors don't like having a dead body on board; they think it brings bad luck."

(To be continued.)

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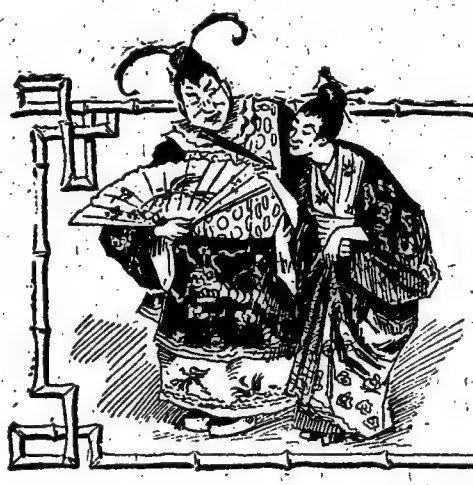

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XV.—HE PUTS IN TWO HOURS' WORK WITH A NEIGHBOUR'S BOY.

It had been arranged that Mrs. Bowser and the lady next door should attend a sewing meeting in the evening and that the lady's four-year-old son should be the guest of Mr. Bowser and the cat for a couple of hours. The little fellow looked round in a dubious way as he was brought over, but fell asleep before the ladies got away and was tucked up on the couch.

"Don't you worry in the slightest," said Mr. Bowser to the mother. "If he happens to wake up, I'll do everything to amuse him. I always loved children, and they have always taken to me. Bless his little heart, but I wish he hadn't fallen asleep."

Five minutes later the front door closed on his mother and the boy awoke. He didn't awake with the languid gentleness of a rabbit, but all of a sudden he sat up with a howl of affright. The howls ran through all the terrace before Mr. Bowser could realise the situation, and the family cat, which had been prowling round the room, made a dive for the hall and appeared totally panic-stricken.

* * * * *

During the next ten minutes Mr. Bowser tried hard to be a mother to that boy. He drummed on the piano, knocked on the window and jumped about the room. He handed over his watch, his pocket-book, his keys and his knife. He ran to the kitchen for sugar, tea, coffee, starch and baking powder. Anything and everything was at the disposal of that boy until he ceased to howl and sob.

"Me want story," he said as he dug the tears out of his eyes with his fists.

* * * * *

Thereupon Mr. Bowser told him the following story: "Once upon a time there was a bobtailed dog. He was spotted. He was three years old. He loved bones and meat and oysters and ice cream. He had no mother or father, but was not a dog to do wicked things. He didn't swear or smoke or drink, and he didn't tell stories. There were dogs who wanted to fight with him, but he would not fight. When they came round and said they could knock his eyebrows off and roll him in the mud, he jumped over the fence and ran away. Well, things went on this way for a long time, and then—and then——"

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And then the boy began howling because there was no more bobtailed dog. Mr. Bowser got the cat in, but the howls continued; then he got down on hands and knees and said he was a horse, but that wouldn't work. He got out a book with pictures, sang "Rock-a-bye Baby" and whistled "Rule Britannia," and after ten minutes' work thrown away he was greeted with that same tearful remark:

"Me want story!"

* * * * *

Thereupon Mr. Bowser, who had spoilt his collar and burst the buttons off his waistcoat with his exertions, sat down and began:

"There was once a bear. He went round looking for boys who cried. (Howls of fear from the boy.) No, I mean he went round looking for girls on roller skates. This bear lived in the woods, and he was not afraid of either man or guns. Whenever he caught a boy—(Howls.) I mean, whenever he caught a girl he would carry her off to his den and eat her up at two mouthfuls. In one year that bear ate up ten thousand girls. One day when there were no girls about and he was very hungry he thought he would eat a boy. (Awful howls.) Hold on, now! I'm going to tell you how the boy killed the bear. You see——"

The boy woke with a howl of affright.

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But the boy refused to see. He'd heard bear stories before, and he knew that there was something wrong somewhere.

He sat up and howled, and he lay down and howled, and the cat fled in terror, and Mr. Bowser felt chills go up his back.

There was more lively drumming on the piano, more wild gallops round the room, more singing and whistling. Exercise in gymnasium couldn't compare with it, but there were only two ways to stop that howling. The boy must be either choked to death or hear another story.

* * * * *

Mr. Bowser wasn't quite ready yet to do murder, and so he gaspingly began:

"Well, you know, there was once a boy named Willie Scott. (The howls ceased.) He had a goat. It was a black goat. You've seen a goat, of course. He has horns and climbs over fences. This goat loved the boy because he was so kind to it. Some boys would hit a goat with a crowbar if they got angry, but Willie never even struck his goat with a stick. If ever you get a goat and want him to love you, don't abuse him. A goat has feelings as well as a boy. Well, one day Willie and his goat were out on the footpath, and along came a lion. The lion was hungry and wanted to eat the boy up. The boy began to cry, but the goat said to him——Let's see. What did the goat say? I don't remember just what he said, but—but——"

He had just got him under his arm.

* * * * *

There was no finish, and there were howls and sobs and lamentations from the kid on the sofa. He wanted to know whether the goat ate up the lion or the lion ate up the boy, and Mr. Bowser had left it all a mystery.

He was picked up and danced round the room, but he added kicks to his howls. He was carried up stairs and down stairs, but he would not be quiet. There came half-formed ideas of throwing him out of a back window or chucking him into the coal bin, but he was at length returned to the sofa.

* * * * *

Then Mr. Bowser said about forty swear words to himself and began:

"You know that a boy should always mind what his father and mother tell him. (Howls cease.) If he doesn't, then he is a bad boy and something will happen to him. I once knew a boy whose name was Sammy. He was about as old as you are and about as naughty. One day he wanted to throw the clock out of the window, but his mother said: 'Sammy, don't do that. If you do, a wolf will come and eat you up.' What did that boy do? He waited until his mother went out shopping, and then he threw the clock out. He didn't believe that a wolf would come, but that same afternoon, when he was playing in the back yard, a great big wolf, with eyes as big as teacups and a tail ten feet long, jumped over the back fence and growled and growled, and the boy screamed for his mother, and the wolf showed his teeth, and—and—well, that's all."

* *

But it wasn't. That wolf either ate that boy up or he didn't, and the youngster on the sofa wanted to know.

He began howling with redoubled vigour, and Mr. Bowser determined on his death. He wouldn't kill him in the house, but he would take him to the river and throw him in.

He had just picked the howler up and got him under his arm, and the cat was looking on with great satisfaction, when the ladies returned and the murder was prevented.

* * * * *

"Woman," said Mr. Bowser after the mother of the child had departed with him in her arms, "the law will probably allow you alimony!"

"But what for?" she asked.

"Separation!" he hoarsely replied. "The limit has been reached. My lawyer will serve the papers on your lawyer to-morrow, and you can go home to your mother by the ten o'clock train."

M. Quad.

[Next Week: He Goes in for Private Theatricals, but Doesn't Succeed.]

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A QUIET GAME.

"WHAT place is that?"

The question was asked by a man on the deck of a steamboat plying on a Canadian river. It was evident from his dress that he was a well-to-do farmer, and it was equally clear from his question that he was not at home in those parts. The inquiry was made of one of the two passengers who had come on board the boat at the landing place from which they were just departing.

"Kerry's Landing," replied the man to whom the question had been put. "An excellent place—to keep away from. Very little more than swamp about there."

Both he and his companion, who was of much lighter build and clean-shaven, wore big slouch hats which obscured the upper half of their face. There was nothing particularly striking about them, nothing to distinguish them from any other of the heterogeneous freight which such boats usually carry.

"It doesn't seem to be a very lively spot," assented the farmer with a slight shiver. "It's chilly now and I think I'll go below. I shouldn't care to settle about here—very little business to be done I should think."

"Business of a kind can be done even there," chimed in the second stranger. "But I vote we go below and have a game of cards—there's sure to be something of that kind going on."

"I'm told that a lot of gambling goes on in these boats; and not only here, but in other parts," said the farmer, as all three made their way below.

As the bigger of the two new passengers threw open the door, a cloud of tobacco smoke came full in their faces and made the farmer cough.

"Rather cloudy in there, Bill," he said to his companion with a dry laugh. "Come in, friend," he added, addressing the farmer.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in!" called a voice. "Come in! Now that you've let out some of the smoke there'll be room for you to get in."

For choice, the famer would have probably remained outside, but his curiosity was too strong, and he entered with the other two.

They found about a dozen men seated at a table, playing cards. There was money on the table, and enough excitement on the faces of the players to denote that the game was not for "love."

"We'll ask you to join us when we begin the next game, gentlemen," said the man who had invited them to enter. "I want another card," he continued, turning to the dealer.

"Right you are, captain," was the reply. And the game continued.

The three new-comers took up positions at different parts of the long table to watch the game and listen to the conversation. The players continued both in the same free and easy style, taking no notice of the new arrivals. The money on the table changed hands in a way that excited the farmer, but the other two appeared to be unmoved,

"What's the row I heard about just before we came on board?" asked the man who had been styled "Captain."

"Some fellow named Frank had killed two men, they told me. Who is this Frank?"

"I've never seen him," answered one of the players; "but I've heard a good deal about him. Seems to be a very clever player with the cards, and has got into one or two scrapes for clearing the whole table."

"Cheating?"

"He has never been caught at it. He appears to have the biggest kind of luck at it and wins a good pile every time he sits down to a game, but it seems to me all straight. Must be as cute as——"

"Just so," agreed the captain. "But what about this killing affair?"

"Steamboat Frank—that's what they call him because he made two or three good hauls on the boats in different parts—killed two of them right off without winking, and would have settled the third if he hadn't cleared out."

"Tell us the yarn," requested the captain, his request being backed by a chorus of approving murmurs.

"Frank had settled down there for about six months, and was earning a living at general dealing, with card playing to fill up the time. One or two of them didn't like him—I heard from an outsider that it was on account of his being too sharp, and getting ahead of them in the dealer business—so they tried to upset him.

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"Frank is about as smart as they make 'em. He is a strong fellow and very quick-witted, and just as ready with his revolver as he is with his wits. He is as straight as a die, they tell me; and many people believe that, although they can't account for his extra good fortune when he handles the cards."

"He isn't the only one who has a run of luck at times," interrupted one of the players sagely.

"I take your money? captain," broke in a voice with a decided French accent.

And one of the players took in a goodly pile of Canadian currency.

"Whenever anyone tries to make things uncomfortable for Steamboat Frank," continued the narrator, "he raises trouble. Frank doesn't let things stand still; he gets to work at once and makes as much of a jangle as a whole peal of bells at Christmas time.

"They didn't like his luck, so two of them tried to put up a job on him. They said he hadn't been dealing fair in his regular business, and they made an attempt to get him up before the sheriff on a faked charge.

"But Frank heard of it and met those two fellows in a quiet spot, where he thrashed them both at one time until they wished they hadn't been born."

"But I thought he had killed two?" queried the captain.

"Hold on a bit; I'm coming to that. Frank, so it seems, only uses his six-shooter when the occasion demands it; and this particular occasion did demand it.

"That's were he differs from some of the fellows, who think nothing of shooting down a man unarmed. He acts square enough.

"There was a girl down there that they called Lizzie—leastways, she was about thirty. Several of the boys were after her, but only two had any chance. Oh!" concluded the story-teller, as he had to hand over his money to the winning man.

"Now, gentlemen," said the captain, looking at each of the three new passengers in turn, "your opportunity has come and you can take a hand."

Four of the men at the table had decided to drop out of the game, having arrived at the end of their resources. Jack and the farmer signified their willingness to join in the game, although the limit was rather high, but Bill quietly declined on the ground that he hadn't enough cash to embark on so risky an undertaking.

"I'm so confoundedly unlucky at that sort of thing," he said apologetically. "And it will be safer for me to look on."

"The two men who stood a chance with Lizzie, were Blazer and Frank," resumed the narrator when they had settled down again.

"Blazer was one of the two men who put up the job on Frank, and instead of bettering his chance, as I suppose he thought he would, he just spoilt it, for Lizzie was mad about it and married Frank right off.

"So Blazer and two of his friends made up their minds to get even and not to be particular about the way they did it. They waylaid Frank one night; they posted themselves a short distance from each other along a quiet part of the road, and had their guns ready. If the first missed him, the second might hit, or the third; he was certain to fall before he was clear of the three.

"The first man fired and Frank went down off his horse and lay in the road. They were joyful over their success, and came out of the hidding places to gloat over their victim, but he wasn't hit at all and had dropped because he thought it was safest.

"The nearest man got his dose of lead from Frank's revolver, and so did the second one, who couldn't get away quick enough; but the third man escaped. That was Blazer."

During this narration the game had proceeded very quickly. The stakes had been increased and bets had gone higher and higher.

One by one the players dropped out, having lost all the cash they could venture, leaving only the captain, the man with the French accent, the story-teller, and Jack still playing.

At this juncture, the man who was recounting the exploits of Steamboat Frank was forced to give up.

The farmer, having lost a goodly sum, had gone on deck to get cool, but Bill was still watching the game, although his continual change of position from one part of the table to another indicated a lack of interest.

Of the three men who continued the game, Jack betrayed the least excitement, which was probably owing to the fact that he was winning considerable sums.

"I know Blazer by sight," remarked the captain as he made a big bet in response to a challenge from Jack. "I fancy, by the look of his face, that he is the kind of man who will do his best to get even."

"I'll take your money, captain," observed Jack quietly as he turned up a card.

The captain said something impolite and pushed the money across the table.

The man with the French accent decided to double the stake for the next deal; the captain was about to follow his example, when Jack said he was quite prepared to make it four times as large, and the other two—galled by the touch of sarcasm in the tone—agreed to the larger sum.

"Blazer will get even if he can," continued the man who had been telling the story.

"I heard that he and some friends intend to do for Frank and are waiting for a good chance; they don't intend to have their little game spoilt this time by rushing the thing."

"But they will have two to reckon with, I should say; for Lizzie is just the kind of girl to help her husband in every way. People say she ought to have been a man."

"You seem to know all about it," observed one of the on-lookers. "S'pose you know them?"

"No, I don't," was the reply. "I'm telling you what was told to me, and you can take it for what it is worth. More passengers," he concluded, as the boat came to a stand. "Must be Harry's Wharf."

But little attention was paid to the stoppage, which was of brief duration; it was quite a usual thing, and in addition to that all the men were greatly interested in the game which was becoming more exciting than ever. Both the captain and the man with the French accent, nerved to desperation by their losses, had determined to stake all that was left to them on one final deal, and their countenances showed how great was the nervous tension.

"They say that Steamboat Frank has gone to another part and isn't likely to return," said the man who knew all about it. "He hasn't been seen here for the best part of two months, and I expect Blazer has got tired of looking out for him. Frank worked the boats pretty strong, and perhaps it was the healthiest thing he could do, to go away. He may not have cheated, but a man gets a bad name anyhow, if he always wins."

At this moment the captain uttered a big oath and sat back in his chair; the man with the French accent said something in French which corresponded in

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strength and quality with the captain's remark, and rose from the table.

Jack drew the money to his side and stuffed it into his pockets.

"I'm willing to pay for drinks and smokes all round," he said in the same cool tone. "Fortune has been with me and I'm much obliged to her; I haven't seen much money lately. Times have been hard."

"Your hard times are all over, Steamboat Frank," said a voice from the door. "Make one movement and you're a dead man. Hold up your hands!"

There was a cry of surprise from those present. They looked in the direction of the door and saw three men with revolvers levelled at Jack.

"Steamboat Frank!" ejaculated everyone. And the captain added something more forcible.

"You've cornered me this time, Blazer," said Frank with a careless laugh, as he held up his hands. "What are you going to do?"

"I'd shoot you right away," replied Blazer emphatically, "if it wasn't for the company. As it is, I shall make you shell out that money and come on shore with us. See?"

The intention was obvious to all present, but no one interfered. Those were lawless times, and the man who interfered might have received a piece of lead instead of the gold and notes which were to come from Frank's pockets.

"Go and turn out his pockets, Jimmy," ordered Blazer.

One of the men thrust his revolver in his belt and walked towards Frank, who was still standing with up-lifted hands.

"Make haste about it," said Blazer, as Jimmy reached the victim. "We don't want to waste time."

Jimmy put forth his hand to feel in Frank's pocket, and then something happened.

There was a howl of rage and pain from the men at the door. Blazer's right hand had received a heavy blow from the butt of a revolver, which made him drop his weapon and caress the wounded member with his left hand. The other man had had his wrist seized so quickly after Blazer had been disabled that it was almost impossible to believe that the same person had done the two things. But it was Bill who had done both.

Jimmy, with one hand just entering a pocket, was seized by the throat and his revolver was taken from his belt. And almost before the spectators knew what had really happened, Blazer and his two companions were holding their hands in the direction of the sky in obedience to orders enforced by the barrels of three revolvers, two in the hands of Frank and one held by Bill, who was none other than Lizzie in disguise."

"Now, gentlemen, right about face, march!" cried Frank. "Mind the stairs! that's right, up you go!"

The men stumbled upstairs to the deck, still holding their hands upwards. They knew enough of their intended victims to understand that any attempt to do otherwise than he ordered would result in their "getting hurt."

Frank marched them to the side of the vessel and then bade them jump overboard. There was no help for it, and with muttered oaths the men complied.

They were about twenty yards from the shore, so they had every chance of reaching it.

"I want you to put us ashore at the first likely spot," said Frank to the steamboat captain. "We are in a hurry."

The captain of the boat was wise in his generation, and made no demur. A few minutes later Frank and Lizzie were on dry land and the boat was steaming away.

"The gentlemen in the cabin didn't come on deck to see us off," laughed Frank. "Very rude of them, eh?"

"Not at all," replied Lizzie. "Do you think I am a fool? I thought it best to lock the cabin door as I came out. We can't afford to have our chances spoilt by overlooking small details."

"Blazer nearly had me that time," said Frank kissing her. "Only he overlooked a detail. That was very bad management on his part, for nobody could call you a small detail."

"Not quite," she answered merrily. "My signal code worked as well as ever, but I really thought once that the Frenchman had found me out when I was telling you about his hands."

G. Day.

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Cricket in the Island of Koro.

WE are having great times in Koro, and life here is hugely exciting.

King Senka says he never was so free from liver complaint, and has lost quite twenty pounds in weight.

When you hit a ball, a piece of the ball would fly off, and in many cases hit a fielder who happened to be near.

Nothing pleases King Senka more than to find that through some cause or another he has lost weight for, as he remarked to me, just think of the grand time he will have in making up the loss.

So when King Senka found that three weeks cricket had rarified him to the extent of twenty pounds adipose tissue, he smiled extensively and said "I will now eat for a week."

This is the week during which the twenty pounds aforesaid are to be reinserted; so thus I have time to relate certain incidents connected with the installation of cricket in the island of Koro, of which Senka is the extensive ruler.

You will remember my telling you of the introduction of football into Koro, and also how a certain bicycle brightened the weary hours of the King and inspired agility into the natives.

Well, King Senka said he was growing tired of funerals, and suggested that football should be given a rest.

Then again the bicycle had lived too fast and was showing signs of it.

We could no longer make the tyres air-tight, and blowing them out with sand instead of air rather slowed the pace. However, no one would have objected to the slight decrease in speed produced by the sand, if the bicycle itself had not objected to be fed on sand, and so to speak, all might have been well.

But it was very evident that putting sand in the tyres seemed to take all the grit out of the machine.

It grew kind of sullen and refused to work; its temper also got very uncertain.

For instance, after King Senka had put himself to the trouble and expense of placarding the island with the fact that he intended to break the ten-mile record, the bicycle refused to be partner in the scheme by the simple but effective method of leaking to the extent of half a pound of sand every five yards.

So cycling got rather tame; and King Senka asked me to suggest something to relieve the monotony of the passing hour.

These were not his exact words. What he actually said was:

"I'm getting 'orrid fat and 'eavy, so do think of some game which will make me once more enjoy an 'earty meal, and I will reward you 'ansome."

I had taught King Senka English but never could get him to sound his h's.

I therefore resolved to teach the King cricket, and so much progress did I make that very night that, when I left the palace, the King was sufficiently educated in the game to remark that he would stir the stumps of half the population of Koro.

The formation of a cricket club is a comparatively easy undertaking in England; but it was horse work in Koro.

In the first place, bats had to be fashioned, stumps made, and cricket balls manufactured out of the trees growing upon the island.

But willing hands made light work; and King Senka inspired a great deal of willingness by remarking, at the outset, that he would break the head of any man who did not work hard. It was quite a week before a sufficient number of bats, balls, etc., had been manufactured, and I hardly think that these articles would have found a very ready sale in England.

King Senka kept on running, and smiled as he ran.

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The balls were not absolutely round; but you could easily distinguish the handle from the blade part of the bats.

We did not go in for such luxuries as cane-splicing, and cork handles, but what the bats lacked in this respect they made up in weight and extent of surface.

Any batsman throwing his bat at a fielder who is about to catch a ball will be ruled out.

There was none of that monotonous evenness of surface which characterises the English-made bat, they appealed rather from the picturesque point of view in presenting an undulating surface suggestive of hills and dales, mountains and valleys.

Again I found, when once we had got properly started, that much more fun could be gained from the implements we played with than with those generally used.

For instance, when you hit a ball, a piece of the ball would fly off, and in many cases hit a fielder who happened to be near.

The balls also added to the fun and kept all interest from flagging.

You could never tell how much of the ball would be left after you had hit it; and very often it would take several fielders to gather it into the bowler's hands.

King Senka once made a great hit and the ball went into the state called "smithereens." Of course, Senka began to run, and continued running until the ball had been collected.

No one could cry "lost ball" since parts of the ball were soon found, and so really only a fraction of the ball was lost.

Thus King Senka kept on running and smiled as he ran.

He stopped and had ten minutes' interval for refreshments when he had run fifty; after which he once more resumed his trot.

He ran 147 runs before the ball had been brought home.

At first some of the players quite mistook the spirit of the game.

Thus when the wicket-keeper once got his eye in the way of the ball he could hardly be persuaded from fighting the bowler.

But little incidents like this kept the game well alive.

It was rather dangerous work wicket-keeping, and no umpire would give a man out unless he could fight him.

A certain amount of diversion was always displayed at first during a game.

Supposing a fielder caught a man out; the man would look upon this as a deliberate insult on the part of the fielder to himself and would take steps accordingly, their respective wives doing ditto.

But in a month's time the natives began to understand the game better; and I had added certain rules which I thought were necessary.

The rules I drew up in addition to those generally used were:

(1.) The wicket-keeper is not allowed to hit the batsman on the head when he is about to play a ball.

(2.) The umpire must not sit on the stumps during actual play.

(3.) In the case of a ball being hit into the air and going to bits, the largest bit must be caught before it touches the ground for the batsman to be given out.

(4.) Any batsman throwing his bat at a fielder who is about to catch a ball will be ruled out.

(5.) All indirect attempts at intimidation such as kneeling on the umpire and pounding him with a bat are not to be indulged in.

(6.) Any batsman using his head to stop the ball may be ruled out leg before.

(7.) If any lady whose husband has been given "out" by the umpire wishes to present that umpire with a bat, she must not steal up behind him and present it across his head, as the umpire is wanted until the game is over.

By the time the rules had been thoroughly digested and the natives had been brought to understand that cricket was not a species of sham fight, with the sham part left out, Koro could boast of several good elevens.

No one has as yet dared to bowl King Senka, so his average is rather a good one.

Last week we had our first great match. I picked an eleven to oppose one King Senka had chosen, and the whole island turned out to see the game.

Three dozen bats had been got ready and a good stock of balls. A large number of balls is always necessary for the wicket-keeper very often uses his head to stop a ball and the ball suffers.

King Senka won the toss and elected to go in first; so I set out my side and the crowd cheered in anticipation of some fun.

Very soon King Senka and another emerged from the Pavilion (save the mark!) and took their stand at the wickets.

Now I had always bowled easy lobs to Senka because I knew he liked them, and did not know how my usual style of bowling would appeal to him.

I used to bowl an exceedingly fast ball with a break from the leg, but had as yet only bowled easy underhands in Koro, with an occasional slow round-hand.

But that day I decided to try my old style. The first ball I sent sped, as we used to say, like "greased lightning," and the ground being rather hard, it rose somewhat, the King receiving it full in the ribs.

He immediately dropped his bat and ran as for dear life to a palm tree, which he quickly scaled.

Finding that the earth still kept relatively in the same place, he climbed slowly down again after a minute or two, and came up to me.

"Did you not feel the earthquake?" he said, looking at me with a terrified expression.

The wicket-keeper is not allowed to hit the batsman on the head when he is about to play a ball.

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"No," said I, "I did not notice or feel anything."

"Most remarkable!" he said. "Just as you were going to bowl the whole earth seemed to shake and a thunderbolt hit me in the ribs."

If any lady whose husband has been given "out" by the umpire wishes to present that umpire with a bat, she must not steal up behind and present it across his head.

"Perhaps it was a sudden attack of indigestion," I suggested.

This set the King thinking; then suddenly looking up he smiled and said:

"You are right; one of my wives gave me some fricasseed cocoanut to-day for breakfast and I ate three or four pounds of it. I remember having a similar pain before, after partaking of what a wife of mine—she died shortly afterwards poor thing—called a *chef d'œuvre*."

He then walked slowly back to the wickets with the air of a man who had solved a difficult problem.

However, I did not try any more swift bowling on Senka, who carried his bat with the good score of eighty-five; but I was not so merciful with the other members of his team who only made twenty between them.

It was very funny to watch the antics of the batsman when I sent down a very swift ball.

Sometimes he would fall flat on his face and then gradually raise his head to see if the cannon ball had passed, and how many men it had killed; or perhaps he would spring into the air with a terrific yell and hurl his bat at the ball as it was coming towards him.

King Senka enjoyed all this immensely, and once when a ball laid out the wicket-keeper, he asked me to show him how to do it.

He also asked me to bowl a ball into the crowd to see what damage it would do; but I was afraid of what damage the crowd might do and so did not indulge in this luxury.

King Senka had a very good wicket-keeper on his side, and it was chiefly through him that my side got out for forty-six runs.

He was exceedingly clever with his feet and could pull out a stump with his toes.

Thus he would stand with one foot very near to the wickets, and when King Senka bowled a ball which happened to go close to the bails, he would aid Senka's good intention by bringing off the bail by the simple but very effective method of shaking a stump with his toes.

In this way Senka took a number of wickets, mine included; not by having a big break on the ball but by a big toe on the wicket.

With the aid of this wicket-keeper King Senka could do the hat-trick or any other feat of bowling he might wish.

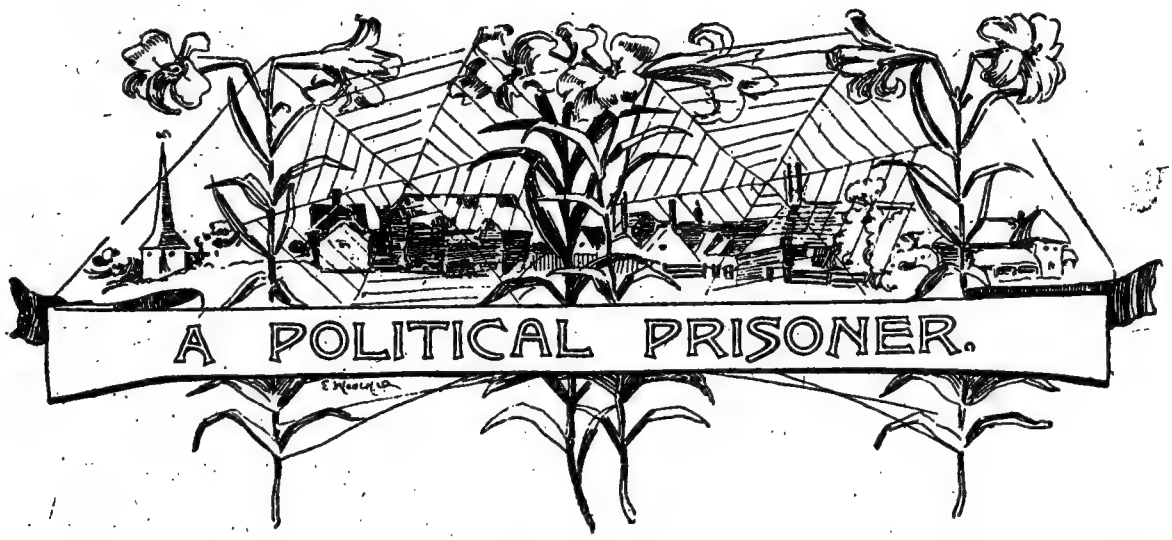
However, it was a very enjoyable game all told, and I am rather looking forward to the next, which takes place a week hence.

For I have been practising bowling slow balls with a big break from the off, and am wondering how they will suit the King, who said to me to-day:

"I 'ate a ball to come along too 'urriedly; but give me slow balls and I can fairly 'ammer them."

The first ball I sent sped, as we used to say, like "greased lightning," and the ground being rather hard, it rose somewhat, the King receiving it full in the ribs.

W. ST. G. DRENNAN.



THE few persons who constituted the "society" of the Siberian village, situated at such a distance from what the world termed civilisation, were surprised for the second time in three weeks—an altogether unprecedented experience.

The government officials, the warders and others in charge of the mines and the prisoners, and their families, led a quiet, perhaps monotonous, existence; it was not devoid of amusement, and there were occasions when they were really gay, but they saw little of the outer world during the period of residence at the penal settlement.

The first surprise was the arrival of Madame Louise Barette, a lovely Frenchwoman on the right side of thirty; she was travelling through the country with a view to demonstrating to the world at large that Russia, and especially Siberia, was not the miserable, mirthless place it was popularly supposed to be, and that the prisoners of the powerful ally of her native country were not cruelly treated.

She had a passport and a semi-official letter which secured for her the opportunity she desired of spending three or four weeks' stay, and she put up at the inn, as it was styled.

But she was such a charming and gifted woman that she had the *entrée* of the houses of all the officials before she had been in the place three days.

She made no attempt to disguise the object of her stay, and laughingly declared that she would truthfully state all she saw, so they had better not allow her to see anything they wished to keep secret; but she captivated them so that they spoke freely in front of her, saying that they could trust her not to repeat what had been mentioned to her in confidence. To this she smilingly assented.

And now they had received information that Gruzineff, the Governor of the province, was about to pay them a visit. What possessed the old fellow to do that? The mines were not of great importance in point of size, and although they sometimes counted a political offender of some magnitude among the prisoners, that was not the case now.

The reputation enjoyed by these mines was to the effect that the life of those sent there was a veritable inferno, but the Governor would not trouble about paying a visit on that account.

"Perhaps he is coming to see the prisoner you call Oscar Sobieski," observed Madame Barette to one of the ladies of the small party who were taking tea out of a *samovar*, in the house of the chief resident official. "He is a political offender."

"Oh, no!" chorused all present.

"He is a nobody," added the lady particularly addressed.

"But he is supposed to be a descendant of a former King of Poland," objected Madame Barette, "and you told me that his offence was an attempt to throw a bomb at the carriage of a Grand Duke—and that it was even supposed that he intended that bomb for the Emperor."

"We don't count that for much," returned Madame Skoleva, smiling condescendingly. "He may be regarded as an aristocrat by some foolish Poles, and of course it was a terrible crime to make an attempt on the Grand Duke; but he is not one of a gang or one of a band that might do a lot of mischief."

This reasoning did not appear to be very conclusive to the Frenchwoman, judging by the look in her eyes, but she signified her complete approval by a nod and a pretty remark to the effect that she feared that she was rather dull, for she ought to have understood the position. Then she fell to thinking of what she had heard concerning Oscar Sobieski.

He had been sent to this far-distant part of the Tsar's dominions, because there were but few prisoners in the settlement and its position made the chance of escape almost impossible; and because of the severity of the treatment meted out to those who were unfortunate enough to be drafted there.

Madame Skoleva had hinted that orders had been given to her husband to make the life of the prisoner as unbearable as possible, without unduly shortening his existence. And from what she had gathered during her brief stay, the Frenchwoman was convinced that this order was being carried out. She had endeavoured to gain permission to see this interesting prisoner, but in spite of her charms and feminine wiles she had not succeeded. Skoleva had remained obdurate, and his wife

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had declined to comprehend the hints thrown out by the visitor.

"I suppose that there would be no chance of pardon for such a man?" asked Madame Barette a few minutes later.

"None whatever, I should say," rejoined the Russian lady emphatically. "Who would wish to have the fellow pardoned? Political exigencies bring about many a strange thing, but it is not conceivable that they could lead to the release of Sobieski."

"The power to pardon him—would it be vested in the Governor?" persisted Madame Barette.

"No, my dear madame," said the commandant himself, who had just joined the little group with three other officials and had overheard the question. "The pardon would have to come from St. Petersburg, but it would be sent to the Governor and he would forward the order to me."

"Perhaps he is coming on purpose to have the man released?" suggested the Frenchwoman, jestingly.

There was a laugh at this joke, and the commandant changed the subject by engaging Madame Barette in conversation concerning her travels. This gradually led to some complimentary remarks about herself.

"I am sure that the Governor will be delighted to make your acquaintance," Skoleva assured her. "I know that he is a great admirer of the French people and no one could fail to have the highest admiration for so charming a member of the French race."

The official grew quite enthusiastic; the woman's beauty fascinated him whenever he came in contact with her.

"I am glad to learn that he is not likely to have me driven away," returned Madame Barette.

While the commandant was lifting his hands in horror at the idea and explaining volubly that the Governor would be charmed and so forth, his wife was once more singing the praises of the Frenchwoman whose presence had transformed their lives during the past few days, and who had in some subtle manner thrown a spell over the whole community.

"She is simply a wonderful woman," she said, as though the others knew nothing about it. "She sings and plays divinely, and she knows—well, all about everything, I really believe. She is very pretty, I suppose I ought to say very beautiful. And she is as attractive as—but there, you know that as well as I do!" she added. She was at a loss for a simile, and that was the easiest way out of the difficulty.

"I quite agree with what you say," said Madame Alexovitch, the wife of another official, "but there is a certain fierceness about her beauty, and her manner is rather weird at times. You remember when she chanted that strange song last week? It made me feel rather creepy, especially as she had the lamps turned low."

"Y-e-s," assented Madame Skoleva reluctantly. It was a half contradiction, and although she admitted the truth of the observation, she did not like to have her words questioned.

"I fancy, if I may be permitted to say so," the commandant was saying to Madame Barette just at this moment, "that you are not exactly French."

Madame Barette shot a swift glance at him and her lips twitched ever so slightly; then she smiled and complimented him on his shrewdness.

"I come from Perpignan," she replied. "You know that Perpignan is almost Spain. I really belong to a Basque family. The Basques are a strange race and nobody knows much about them."

"Ah! I thought as much. I haven't forgotten that weird song of yours the other evening."

"If I were an official here," continued the Frenchwoman, "I would soon tame all you prisoners. I shall try my art on the Governor. Do you know"—this quite suddenly—"I have a presentiment that he will order the release of Sobieski."

The commandant shook his head and again turned the conversation.

Six days later, His Excellency arrived. He was attended by a limited suite and took up his residence in the commandant's house.

He was to stay three days and had come on a visit of inspection.

On the second day of his stay Madame Skoleva entertained a small party in his honour and Madame Barette was the chief guest. She had evidently been impressed by the fact that the Governor was a high state dignitary and had made up her mind to exercise all her powers in order to please him.

That she did so was proved by a remark of Gruzineff very soon after he had been introduced.

"Beautiful and clever; I can find no words that will properly qualify those adjectives."

By virtue of his rank, Gruzineff should have been the central figure of the party, but Madame Barette assumed that position, and everybody, including Gruzineff, did homage to her. Everyone came under the spell which this gifted woman exercised over her fellow creatures.

"Will you not sing something to us?" asked Gruzineff of Madame Barette. "Skoleva tells me that you sing divinely—those are his very words—and I quite believe it."

"Gruzineff is bewitched," murmured Skoleva to his deputy. "Look at him! He is quite under the spell."

In response to the Governer's appeal, backed by a murmur of approval from other guests, Madame Barette sang to them in French. When she had finished the song, she offered to repeat the strange chant to which allusion has been made. The Governor eagerly accepted the offer; the others were not so eager, for they had heard it and were a little afraid.

Candles were extinguished and the only light was that of a lamp with a red shade. The Frenchwoman seated herself so that the reddish tint fell full upon her. The guests grouped themselves in a semi-circle in front of her, with the Governor in the most prominent position. They did this under her instructions, because "it helped her imaginations and enabled her to give full expression to the words.

Although they listened intently—their eyes fixed on her, not daring to move, scarcely able to breathe, so intense were their feelings—yet they hardly knew what they were listening to.

It seemed that she was playing the part of an old woman searching the battle field for the body of her son who had been killed; that she found it and carried it to a camp fire where she wailed over the loss of her only child.

No one was more fascinated than Gruzineff; she has done her best to please him and she had succeeded. That was what Skoleva thought as he noted the dazed expression on the Governor's face when the chant was finished.

Madame Barette withdrew from the room to an adjoining chamber as she concluded, and Gruzineff followed her. The effort exhausted her and she retired to Skoleva's little den or study to rest awile, as she had

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done before; the commandant assumed that Gruzineff had followed her in order to thank her.

It was quite twenty minutes later when Madame Barette returned, alone. She was much agitated and held an envelope in her hand.

"I am dreadfully worried," she cried in distressed tones, "I fear that I have quite upset the Governor with my song. He followed me in order to thank me, but he seemed to be quite ill and has gone to his room. He gave me this letter for you, Monsieur Skoleva, and said that the order was to be carried out immediately. He will explain in the morning, when he is better. Oh! I wish someone had come to us."

There was some consternation at the information that the Governor was indisposed. Skoleva took the letter and hurried off to the bedroom occupied by His Excellency. Madame Barette was so much upset that she declared she could stay no longer, and expressed grave fears that Gruzineff would visit his wrath upon her on the following day.

"I am terribly afraid of your Russian high functionaries, because they can punish you so severely if you offend them."

Madame Barette was gone when Skoleva came back with the intelligence that the Governor was in bed and comfortably asleep. He had learnt this fact from Gruzineff's valet, who said that his master appeared stupefied, but otherwise well. Skoleva also seemed disturbed and said he must go to the prison at once, as he had something important to do.

So the party broke up rather unceremoniously.

When Gruzineff descended on the following morning his first words were:

"What happened last night? I can't remember anything after that song."

"Your Excellency became indisposed," replied Skoleva deferentially. "I hope your Excellency is better this morning."

"H'm! I can remember nothing that happened after she began that chant."

"I carried out your Excellency's orders last night as soon as Madame Barette gave me the letter," said Skoleva, thinking that this would stimulate Gruzineff's memory.

"What orders? What letter?" asked the latter with eyes wide open with surprise.

"The letter, written by yourself and dated from St. Petersburg, ordering me to release Oscar Sobieski."

Skoleva was fairly startled by the outburst which followed his words.

The Governor raved that he had written no such letter and accused Skoleva of tricking him; but when the commandant showed him the letter he subsided and stared vacantly at his own handwriting.

After gazing at it for at least a couple of minutes, he looked at Skoleva and continued quietly:

"Skoleva, that woman has tricked us. I can only suppose that she hypnotised me and made me write this letter. You have released Sobieski and you will find that Madame Barette has gone also. I don't know how she did it; tell me what you know about last night."

Skoleva quickly explained.

"It won't do for this to be known, Skoleva," said the Governor, uneasily. "They have a long way to go, but I doubt whether we can recapture them. The woman has no doubt laid her plans well, and we know that the inhabitants are always ready to assist escaped prisoners. If we try to recapture them, we also lay ourselves open to—— No, I think it best to say nothing, and in two or three weeks you can contrive to forward a report that he is dead. See?"

"It is rather risky, sir," answered Skoleva. He was a man of intelligence and saw an opportunity for promotion. "I will do it, and your Excellency will not fail to remember me for early advancement."

The Governor said he would remember, and he did; for in three months Skoleva was transferred to a better place.

Before they left the village, Madame Skoleva received a note from Madame Barette; the letter, after apologising for her abrupt departure, volunteered some explanation. It ran as follows:

"When my husband was sent to Siberia, I determined to release him if I devoted years to the task. I relied on the gifts which nature has been good enough to bestow on me. I came to you and learnt all I could. I wrote to the Governor anonymously, telling falsehoods about the management of the prison. I knew the kind of man he was, and I believed that if I could get him near the prison I should succeed in my plan. I could not hope to carry it through if he remained at a distance. If he did not come, I was determined to direct my efforts towards you and your fellow official; but I did not wish to injure you, because you are only the stupid tools, whereas I had a debt to pay M. Gruzineff, and it amused me to think of releasing my husband and bringing disgrace upon that man at the same time.

"Fortune favoured me. I hypnotised Gruzineff and made him write that letter and then sent him to bed. I told him to date it from the capital, because it looked more plausible, although I am convinced that you would have suspected nothing had it been dated from your own house. I had prepared you for the order to release my husband, by pretending that I had a presentiment that M. Gruzineff would bring an order for the release of Oscar Sobieski.

"It was a fatiguing journey, but money will do much, even in Russia. We are beyond the reach of the Tsar's creatures. We shall have to work against Russian tyranny from a distance in future, but we shall not cease to work.

"It will interest you to know that I am not a Frenchwoman, even in a remote degree. I had to invent a little story to satisfy you. I am not a Basque, but a Finn; this will help you to understand why I so heartily assist my husband in his fight against Russia."

G. Knight.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT SERVANTS.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Invisible Man," by H. G. Wells, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. Geo. Daniels, 20 Princess Street, Accrington. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT COWS AND BULLS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 23rd. Post-cards only, please.

They Had Got Cronje.

AT the time of Cronje's surrender a gentleman sent his servant, Bridget, to the fishmonger's to buy some plaice for dinner. Bridget, who was a bit uncultivated and who knew nothing of the war and its doings, set off for the fish.

When she arrived at the shop a lady was inside buying plaice, which was the kind of fish she herself had come for.

The fishmonger, as he was serving the lady, happened to remark:

"They've got Cronje."

"Have they?" asked the lady, and nothing further was said.

Bridget misunderstood the meaning, she thinking that the plaice had got a disease called "cronje."

When Bridget got back with the fish she went straight to her master and said:

"Oi've got the plaice, sor, but the fishmonger said they'd got Cronje." G. D.

A Bad Bargain.

A FARM servant was married last year, and, being short of the amount necessary to defray the fees, he promised the officiating clergyman that he would repay him by giving him a bag of potatoes when they were ready for digging up.

The clergyman waited a considerable time but no potatoes were forthcoming, so he called on the man to inquire as to the reason of the delay.

"Well," was the despairing reply, "to tell yer the truth, guv'nor, she ain't wuth it!" W. C.

A New Fashion.

A SERVANT girl happened to be engaged at a farm-house where the mistress was known to have a rather hasty temper.

On the first Saturday night the girl was told to clean the boots and shoes for Sunday.

Coming into the kitchen a short time afterwards, the mistress, seeing that the maid had cleaned her own boots first, was so enraged that she lifted them and threw them into a tub of water which stood near.

The servant made no sign; but when all the boots were cleaned she also lifted them and threw them into the tub of water.

"Why, whatever possessed you to do that?" gasped her mistress in a fury.

"Oh, I jist thocht it was the fashion o' the house," calmly replied the girl. A. D.

Not a Cannibal.

MRS. JONES was engaging a servant, and after describing the duties expected of her, said:

"I hope you are fond of children and animals, because——"

"Lor, mum, I ain't no bloomin' cannybil. What do you take me for?" and she left the house in disgust.

S. R.

Would He Bring It With Him?

AMONG the servants of a Scotch family is one young woman of native wit who never is at a loss for an expedient.

She answered the door-bell the other day, when a stranger presented himself, and asked to see the lady of the house.

"What name shall I say?"

"Mr. Stiltzenheimer," said he.

"Beg pardon, sir," said she.

"Stiltzenheimer," repeated he.

The girl hesitated at the name, which was evidently beyond the intricacies of her speech, and then, opening the door to the parlour, said with a laugh:

"Step in, sir, if you please, and—and bring the name with you." W. P.

Another Injustice.

MISTRESS: "Woman, alive, you have cooked the fowl I got for Sunday instead of the beef."

Servant: "Shure Oi didn't know it was the mate ye wanted fur to-day."

Mistress: "You might have known I wanted the fowl on Sunday without my telling you."

Servant: "Moight I, indade? Did yez expict ter git a moind reader fur foive bob a wake?" C. E. S.

Baby's Medicine.

"BABY was taken very bad while you were out, mum," said the new servant girl.

"Oh, dear!" said the young wife. "Is he better now?"

"Oh, he's all right now, but he was bad at first; he seemed to come over quite faint, but I found his medicine in the cupboard."

"Found his medicine? Good gracious! What have you been giving the child? There's no medicine in the cupboard."

"Oh, yes, there is, mum! It's written on it," and then the girl triumphantly produced a bottle labelled "Kid Reviver." W. G.

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Not Class.

KATIE, from the North, got a "place" in a West Edinburgh house. A few days after her arrival her mistress gave her a list of groceries required, and told her to go to the establishment of a big firm in Princes Street with the order.

"Eh, mem?" said Kate dubiously. "It's only the swells that gang tae that shop." T. O'B.

The Method of Exhaustion.

IN the North of Ireland the other day a servant girl was brought to a hospital suffering from the effects of an over-dose of poison.

When questioned as to her motive for taking it, she replied:

"I wasn't feeling well, and I went to missus's medicine-chest. There was a bottle marked 'three drops for an infant, six for an adult, and a teaspoonful for an emetic.' I knew I wasn't an infant, I wasn't sure about an adult—so I thought I must be the emetic, and took the spoonful." J. McD.

She Misunderstood His Meaning.

A SERVANT GIRL was sent to a certain bookmaker at Leicester to take her master's selections for a race.

The girl asked the bookmaker if she were to put a shilling on a horse, and it won, how much she would get?

"If the horse started at twenty to one," he answered, "you would get twenty-one shillings back; if at ten to one, eleven shillings; if at five to one, six shillings back."

"But supposing," asked the servant, "the horse started at one o'clock, how much should I get then?"

The bookie gave it up. J. B.

Taking Instructions Literally.

"IF anyone should call this afternoon, Mary, say that I am not well," said a mistress to her newly-engaged servant. "I'm afraid I ate a little too much of that rich pudding for lunch, and it or something else has brought on a severe headache. I am going to lie down."

A few moments later the mistress, from her room near the head of the stairs, heard Mary say to two aristocratic ladies who called for the first time:

"Yes'm, Mrs. B. is at home, but she ate so much pudding for lunch she had to go to bed."

W. J. B.

She Knew Her Business.

A YOUNG woman answered an advertisement for a servant, and the lady of the house seemed pleased with her, but before engaging her there were some questions to ask.

"Suppose," said the lady—"now only suppose, understand—that you were carrying a piece of steak from the kitchen, and by accident should let it slip from the plate to the floor, what should you do?"

The girl looked the lady straight in the eye for a moment before asking:

"Is it a private family, mum, or are there boarders?"

"Boarders," answered the lady.

"Pick it up and put it back on the plate," firmly replied the girl.

She was engaged. R. S.

Rather Warm.

A LADY had occasion the other day to administer a seidlitz powder to her Irish servant. She put the contents of the blue paper into one glass of water in the usual fashion, and the contents of the white paper into another. When she put them together and the mixture effervesced violently, she handed the tumbler to the patient, saying:

"Drink it quick."

But the girl, instead of swallowing it, sat down precipitately on the floor, and exclaimed:

"Why, ma'am, yez surely wouldn't expect me to drink it bilin' hot!" A. W.

A Doorstep Comedy.

MRS. B. is one of those unfortunate ladies who are rarely out of communication with the servants' registry office. Tradesmen and others who frequently call at her house are met at the door by a perpetually changing staff of domestics.

On one occasion, when a ring was heard, for some reason or other, Mrs. B. herself went down, and opening the door, found outside the milk boy with the afternoon's milk.

On seeing her, he leant against the doorway and gave vent to a prolonged whistle. Then imagine her feelings when he addressed her thus:

"What! another fresh 'un! You won't stay here long, I lay. She's a 'orror, she is." L. B. S.

Tableau!

THERE was a little dinner-party at No. 9.

"Mrs. Johnson," said one of the guests, "how prettily you have ornamented the crust of this game-pie."

"Yes," replied the hostess, "it is rather neat, isn't it? I'll ask Mary how it was done," and calling the maid she said:

"Mary, do you know how cook got such a novel design on the pie-crust?"

"Oh, yes, mum," replied Mary innocently. "She did it with your false teeth!" A. L. T.

A Misunderstanding.

ANCIENT PARTY (from the provinces): "I want a pair of shoes, young man."

Polite Assistant: "Certainly, madam. Something neat and tasty, I suppose. Now, there's a nice shoe that's been worn all this spring."

Ancient Party (with fervour): "Law, bless the man; I don't want nothing that's been worn all the spring. I want a new pair of shoes!" C. C.

Working to Music.

A LADY, who had a very slow servant, noticed that it took the girl almost half the day to scrub the kitchen—a piece of work that should have been accomplished in an hour. The servant always accompanied her scrubbing with a song; and one day the mistress became alarmed at the slow progress she made.

"'Mid pleasures" (scrub) "an' palaces" (scrub) "tho' we may" (scrub) "roam——"

"Jane!" called the mistress sternly, "I am tired of hearing 'Home, Sweet Home'; sing 'The Campbells are Coming.'"

Nothing loth, Jane did so, and fell into the trap so cleverly laid for her. Her scrubbing-brush flew over the boards with lightning rapidity. The poetry of motion had made swift work. E. D.

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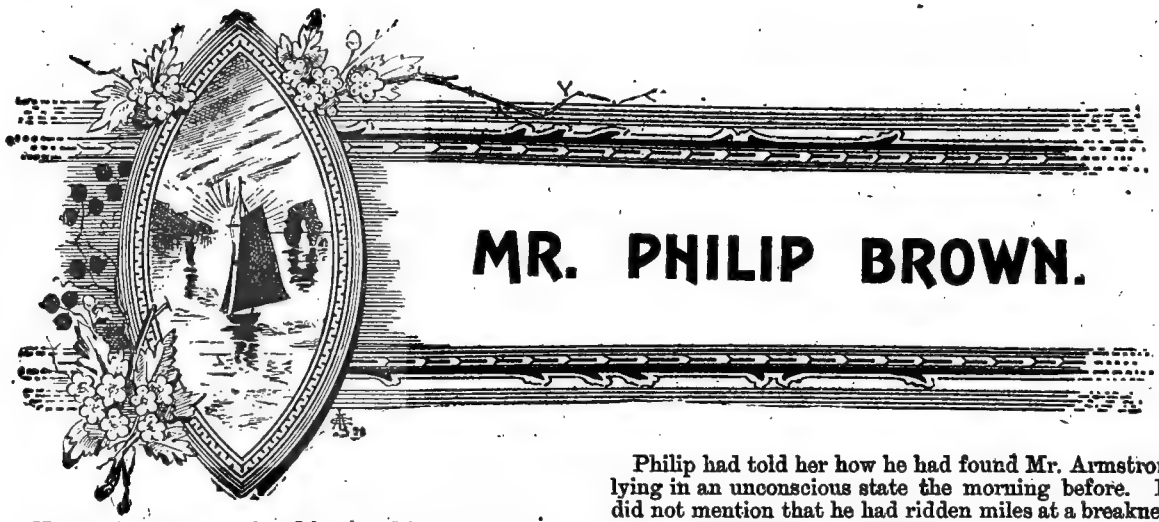

MR. PHILIP BROWN.

HELEN ARMSTRONG closed her hand-bag and gathered together the scattered belongings that had accumulated during her long journey; she drew on her gloves and rearranged her hat and veil for not the first time in the last half-hour. She knew that the train speeding on was surely, rapidly, bringing her to Eglington; in a few minutes more she would be in her father's embrace.

How she had begged to join her father; she had endeavoured to convince him how unhappy she was away from him and how much to their mutual advantage her presence at Eglington would be.

At last she wrung a promise from him that she should go to him at the end of her schooldays.

The train slackened its speed, the friendly porter came to help Helen off with her hand luggage, and in a moment she found herself on the platform in front of a miserable-looking station decorated with the sign "Eglington."

She gazed around seeking the dear familiar figure she had pictured all these last few days, but instead she saw advancing towards her a tall, brown-bearded man. He lifted his hat courteously, and said in accents which little accorded with his rough mining dress.

"Miss Armstrong, I presume; I am Philip Brown."

"Oh, are you Mr. Brown?" she asked, almost rudely. "Where is papa? I thought, of course he would be here."

Her voice trembled.

"I know it must be very disappointing, but he couldn't come; it was impossible; he is ill."

"I never knew him to be ill before," she said, half dazed.

"It is very sudden. He seemed quite well up to a day or two ago, but yesterday morning the stroke came—I mean, you know—oh, don't be alarmed, Miss Armstrong—I—we all hope for the best."

Philip broke off, feeling utterly helpless as he saw the tremulous lip and the blue eyes filling with tears. Philip silently helped her into the dog-cart that was to conduct them home, and it was only after they had left the desolate station a half-mile behind that the silence was broken.

"Mr. Brown, please tell me all about it," Helen said; her voice sounded hard and cold, even in her own ears; she felt stunned and numb, and was conscious of an unreasonable dislike for this strong, bronzed man beside her.

Philip had told her how he had found Mr. Armstrong lying in an unconscious state the morning before. He did not mention that he had ridden miles at a breakneck speed to the telegraph station in order to summon the doctor in time for the evening train, nor that all night he had sat by the bedside of his friend watching for the faintest signs of returning consciousness, until at daybreak, before he had started to meet Helen, his vigil had been rewarded by a few broken sentences from the stricken man.

"Helen—Philip—Helen—go before it's too late; bring my little girl."

When Philip paused Helen asked firmly, though her face was white:

"Is it the end?"

Philip for one moment hesitated, but as he looked down into her questioning eyes he could but answer the truth.

"I fear so, but I hope we will be in time."

At last Helen knelt by the side of her father's bed.

"Papa. Papa. Dear daddy," she cried, as she kissed her father, and the sick man smiled contentedly as he answered:

"Daughter."

Philip and the doctor left the room, and Helen laid her soft young cheek against her father's face and clasped his hand almost fiercely, as if to hold him back. He read her thoughts and answered:

"It is no use, little girl. I am going! it was only the thought of seeing you kept me here so long."

"No, no, papa; don't leave me."

"Be brave, Helen; I'll leave you in good hands, dear; the fortune-hunters won't get you."

It seemed to Helen that his mind must be wandering.

"Call Philip, Helen; I must speak to him."

She called him reluctantly.

"Did you want me, sir?"

"Yes, Philip, my boy, I want you." His voice was growing weaker with each breath. "I wish you to take care of my little girl; I am dying, and I can't leave her alone in the world; she must have someone whose right it is to guard her. You are the only man to whom I could trust her. Will you marry Helen?"

"Mr. Armstrong, dear, kind friend that you have been to me, your wishes are my laws. I will take care of your daughter always." Why didn't he say, "if she will let me." But his only thought was for the friend who lay dying.

Helen knelt down by the bed, and, throwing her arms round her father's neck, burst into tears for the first time.

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"Papa, not that; don't make me marry anyone."

"It is my last wish, dear; I must know you have a protector; go, Philip, bring someone to perform the ceremony; my time is getting short."

Indeed, Helen almost regretted her remonstrance as she looked at the pallid face of her idolised father, and during Philip's brief absence she said no more, but caressed him whose life-long care had made her forget that she was motherless.

Just as the sun was setting Philip and Helen were married at the side of John Armstrong's bed. As the last words were said, a peaceful smile illumined the face of the dying man, and, grasping a hand of each, he said, "God bless you," and passed away.

The memory of that hour remained with Helen many a day; the utter strangeness of her surroundings added to her desolation. Philip saw to her physical comfort, but dare not offer a word of consolation to the girl whose sorrow seemed crushing. She appeared not to be aware of his existence and only answered in monosyllables any remark he made.

"You will return to London, I presume?" he said as they walked back from the grave after the funeral.

"Yes, immediately," Helen answered.

* * * * *

In the early spring of the following year Helen went to Burfield with the mother of her dearest school-friend, Lena Horton, with whom she had made her home since her father's death.

She found herself growing brighter and happier, the change and out of door life doing her much good.

One morning as she was bicycling over the long bridge that connects Burfield and the village of Hampton, she passed a man who looked at her very steadily for a moment. He was tall, rather dark, clean shaven and well-dressed.

"By Jove, it's Helen, as sure as I am alive," he exclaimed. "I hadn't hoped to see her so soon," he thought; "my boat has been in an hour and I have been putting off the evil moment of sending up my card; I fear she won't receive me very warmly."

Suddenly he saw her dismount and examine her machine. She looked about helplessly, and seemed to be at a loss to know what to do. Philip hurried towards her and said:

"May I be of service to you?"

"Oh, thank you, I am afraid I have punctured one of my tyres," she replied, and Philip was surprised at her beauty as she turned her face towards him. "I am not an experienced cyclist. I hardly know what to do."

"Do you carry a repair outfit? I may be able to mend it."

"Why, I don't know, there are lots of things in that little satchel, perhaps there is a repair outfit."

Philip could scarcely repress a smile at the woeful ignorance of this young woman in regard to her machine, but he looked into the little sachel and brought to light tools with which to mend the tyre.

While he was busying himself about it he thought of his peculiar position. There he saw he was gallantly assisting his own wife. He saw that she did not recognise him in his changed dress and shaven face, and he was glad that she did not, as he felt sure that she would not have smiled so brightly or talked so pleasantly had she known.

"Do you ride much? Don't you think you ought to learn what to do in case of accidents?"

"I am a beginner and I never go far from the hotel yet. I suppose I ought to learn about my machine, but I don't believe I am a mechanical genius," she laughed. "It's really much nicer to have someone to do it for me."

"I hope I may always be so fortunate as to appear at the right moment."

Helen drew herself up to her full height of five feet four and replied as coldly as she could:

"Thank you very much; it is finished, I believe."

She took the bicycle from him, and mounting rode back in the direction of the inn. As Philip stood, hat in hand, he reflected that she might be a little difficult. He fell to wondering if it were possible to hire a machine, and about decided not to make his identity known just yet.

Mrs. Horton and Helen were at dinner when Philip stepped into the dining room, and in following the waiter to his seat he passed their table. Helen inclined her head very slightly; she evidently did not consider her morning meeting a sufficient introduction.

In the afternoon he lit a cigar and strolled along the verandah. Only a sense of duty had brought him here—the promise to his friend, the best friend the world could give, had been his guiding star the last eight or nine months, and the time had come when he felt it right to see for himself how his little charge was. Now that he was here and had seen Helen he was unaccountably happy.

"A man must have someone to live for," he mused, "and even if it's a young girl, who, for all you know, doesn't care whether you live or not, it's better than a selfish life."

His thoughts were interrupted by a few words that came from the group of ladies.

"Yes, I love to ride."

"Alone?"

"Oh, I don't mind that; the country is so pretty about here that I could never be lonely."

How clear and childlike was her voice. He could not hear the words of the others, but her answer was plain.

"Not a bit of it. Why should I be afraid? Nothing ever happens—I mean, of course, that nothing is likely to happen."

"Then you are going to keep our little encounter to yourself," thought Philip. "Very well, then, my lady; you and I have a secret between us."

After some search Philip succeeded in hiring a bicycle and before he had been at Burfield twenty-four hours he started for a ride. He went slowly over the bridge hoping to find Helen, and sure enough he soon over-took her. She acknowledged his bow, and thus encouraged he rode beside her.

"Your tyre is all right, I hope?" he remarked.

"Yes, indeed; thanks to your dexterity, it's as good as new," replied Helen graciously.

And Philip found himself thinking that a girl never looks so pretty as when on a bicycle.

"It is a charming morning for a ride," said Philip,

"Yes, I am glad it's pleasant, as I am going to the training school."

"Why, so am I," said Philip, coming to a sudden conclusion on the subject, "May I ride with you?"

"Since we are bound for the same place we may as well go together," consented Helen. There was no need to be priggish, and, besides, she thought dolefully, a married woman is always safe.

"Don't your friends worry about you when you go off

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alone? Now, for instance, since you punctured your tyre yesterday, won't they fear some accident?" questioned Philip artfully.

"Oh, no, you see I did not tell them about the tyre," she coloured slightly, "it was such a little thing."

"So they do not know it? Well," he continued, musingly, "perhaps that is better."

Helen looked at him inquiringly, but he rode on studying the view so intently that she could learn nothing from his face. She felt, just as he had meant her to feel, that their meeting had a clandestine element.

The morning passed quickly and pleasantly, and when they drew near the hotel Philip asked her if he might accompany her the next morning.

"Yes, if I go out," she assented coolly.

"Our acquaintance is a little unconventional, I suppose you don't even know my name, which, by the way is Brown."

"Oh, not Brown," Helen burst out impetuously.

"Yes, as common a one as that, Don't you like it?"

"It has rather unpleasant associations for me. But, of course, as you say, it is not a rare name. It would be foolish to allow it to prejudice me."

The morning ride became a habit with Philip, and he and Helen always met, sometimes by accident; sometimes they planned to do so. Each day Philip became more convinced that life without Helen would be flat, stale, and unprofitable. There were times when she became almost confidential, but she always checked herself and withdrew into the prim dignity that amused him immensely.

"You have never told me anything about yourself," said Philip once, when they were resting in a shady nook after a hard spin.

"You ought to know a great deal about me, having ridden with me every morning for the past fortnight," answered Helen. "Riding a bicycle is a great test of disposition, they say."

"I do know a great deal about your disposition, so that I am anxious to know about your life," said he looking tenderly at her. "You have never told me your name and I have evaded finding it out at the hotel in the hope that you would tell me yourself——"

"I haven't told you my name, because——" she paused, and then continued defiantly, "because I hate it, and it's the same as yours. Please don't ask me why. Please go away and leave me—I am miserable."

She turned her face away and Philip fancied she was crying. He longed to take the pathetic little figure in his arms and tell her how glad he was that their names were the same, but he only said:

"Forgive me if I have hurt you; I would rather die than cause you to suffer. Please let us be friends again."

He took her hand for a moment, and Helen turned her flushed, tear-stained face towards him, and, withdrawing her hand, said, in a brave effort to be calm and forceful:

"Mr. Brown, you must not speak in that way to me."

"But, don't you see," said Philip, taking her hand again, "that you are very dear to me?"

"I can't let you; I am not free."

Her voice trembled, and she released her hand from his grasp once more.

"Please do not make it any harder for me. I am married."

She burst into tears and Philip felt altogether guilty and despicable.

"Poor little woman, poor little woman," he said caressingly.

"I am the victim of a marriage that was forced upon me; I couldn't refuse it; I was not consulted. My dear father did what he thought was right. The man he chose for me thought nothing of me. To him I was a child—a piece of property to be taken care of—but as to my having any feelings on the subject of my own marriage—that never occurred to him. If papa had given him a pet dog he would have taken it in the same way."

Philip winced, but she, preoccupied with her wrongs, continued:

"I have not seen him since, and I never understood till now how horrible my bondage might become."

Helen blushed as she realised what her words might seem to imply, but her companion appeared not to notice them and asked:

"Has the man—your husband—fulfilled his duty to you?"

"Yes; he has been unfailing in his care for my interests. He manages my business affairs and writes me quite regularly. Mere letters of business, of course. He has never forced himself upon me; I am grateful for that."

"What will you do when he comes to you, as he certainly will do?" asked Philip, almost sternly.

"I don't know. I shut my eyes to that."

"You must open your eyes." He grasped her wrist. "Helen, look, he has come."

Helen pulled herself away, and rising to her feet, said with indescribable expression:

"Philip."

O. N.

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EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII. *(continued).*

PALE with rage and mortification Hardrada bade some of the men bring Einar out, and they placed him, still bound, in a sitting posture against the wall. His eyes met Astrid's, and the glance that passed between them was pitiful to see, yet a prouder light came into Astrid's face because of it, and into her lover's a strange calm.

"Now say your say to each other and be done with it," said Hardrada. "It will be your last chance. As to Einar's life, though it irks me to let him go, I will grant him a whole skin for your sake. If you will wed me peaceably to-day and he will take oath never to draw weapon on me again, he shall go free to-morrow. If not, he will never see the light of to-morrow, and whether you will or no, you will become my bride."

"These are hard terms," said Einar, speaking to Astrid alone; "but our enemy the coward has all the advantage, and it might be better for us, after all, to yield. It is not for myself, love, for if I may not have you I care not for life, but for your safety. I will take any oath now, but it will go hard with me if I keep it after."

"Nay, Einar," said Astrid, kneeling beside him and kissing him so that all might see, "I will not keep my life at the price of your happiness. Let Hardskull do his worst; I have yet means to defeat him. But tell me first how it was between you and Thora, for Alfdane brought me a sorry tale."

And she told him quickly of Alfdane's message, for even in that time of despair a pang of jealousy lingered. Einar heard her with wonder, then with anger at the meanness of his foes, and when she had done told her the truth before he could be stopped. Then, as Hardskull stepped towards him, he cried derisively:

"It was a pretty lie for a coward and a troll to cheat an honest man with, most noble host. Yet you can make the last part good, if you dare. If Astrid wills, let the wedding-feast go on, but before it is done and night comes, let me fight with you and with Hrolf—aye, and with Alfdane, too, until you three, or I, be sent to Hela. I am weak from binding and scant food, as you know, but I am in desperate case, and I dare you to go on holmgang with me, one after the other."

Now he looked so worn and weary that they could scarce refuse the challenge, seeing that it could have but one end, and many of the men around cried shame on Hardrada because he hesitated. Hrolf Red-Hand was for taking up the challenge at once, but Hardrada and Alfdane talked apart before they decided, and then the former said:

"If Astrid will wed me, it shall be as you say, Einar, lest men should deem us cowards, but seeing that you have no weapon of your own we will make our fight a wrestling bout, and it shall be on the cliff by the beacon, where he who is thrown will go headlong into the sea. You are famous for throws of that kind, friend. And Hrolf, because of that, shall have first bout."

"It were better to agree even to this," said Einar to Astrid. "If you are wedded what matter? I shall make an end of them all once I get my arms free and my grip on them, and you will be mine alone by nightfall"

"Then be it so," said Astrid. "For your sake be it so, Einar, and Odin grant you victory, Thor give you strength."

So when the twilight drew on and the great fire blazed ruddily on the many faces, the tables were set for the feast. The wine was brought in in great flagons, the loving-cup set by Hardrada's right hand, and the silver shoes placed near the bridal seat. They took Einar back to the small chamber and bolted him within, leaving him to listen alone, and the women brought a bridal dress for Astrid, and lit the lamps around the hall.

Then, pale, but tearless and firm because she thought only of Einar in doing it, Astrid suffered herself to be led in. She stood before Hardrada, and he smiled as fair a smile as his evil visage would allow—which was half a frown, after all—and gave her his hand to help her up the step into the great chair. He would have pressed her slim fingers, but they were cold as ice, and chilled him, so he forebore.

And Astrid sat at his side in the bridal-seat, and Thyra the maid put the silver shoes upon her feet and the golden crown upon her head, and Hrolf poured out the offerings to the gods, and chiefly to Bragi, god of happiness.

And then the loving-cup was filled, and Hardrada and she must both drink, and they were made man and wife.

* * * * * *

Einar, from the darkened chamber, heard fragments of the talk, and knew how things were going, and that Astrid was now the wife of his enemy, and the knowledge was very bitter. His heart misgave him of Hardrada's good faith. He struggled in his bonds again with fiercer effort, and rolled on the floor, trying to wear them out upon the hard stones. This time he was successful, and at last one arm was free. Then slowly he undid the other knots and shook the coils from him, and stood unfettered.

The small chamber had but one window, yet it was large enough for a man to creep out, and, scarcely knowing his object, he climbed through and stood in the open air. His first thought was to get round to the back of the house and seize some carle's weapon so that he might not be defenceless. He had taken but one step forward when a man with winged helmet sprang from behind the corner of the gable and seized him by the throat in a violent grasp.

* * * * * *

Now the wine was mounting into the heads of the men, and Hrolf Red-Hand was singing grim songs of fight and fire, and Alfdane was telling fey stories, and Hardskull was grinning knowingly from the bride-seat. Astrid thought the time passed slowly, yet all too quickly, for no sign was made of fulfilling the promise made with regard to Einar, and in her fear was impelled to question her lord. He laughed.

"Think you I keep every promise I make?" said he. "And did I say to-night? Never fear, we shall wrestle with this old love of yours, sweet wife, but I think it will be best to leave it till daylight. We are but new wed, and it would go hard to part so soon. And, perchance, Einar will be better for a good night's sleep."

And leaning over, with wine cup spilling its red stain on the floor, he whispered to Alfdane with a chuckle:

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"And in the night a sharp knife can easily find a particular muscle, troll; and that muscle short, 'tis little wrestling our champion will do. It was a good thought of yours, troll."

Alfdane smiled evilly, but said no word.

At that moment there came a clatter of sharp blows upon the door. Hardskull sat upright startled, then he called thickly:

"Come in, stranger, out of the cold. This is our wedding feast, and all are welcome!"

The door opened, and I, Sigmund the Skald, stepped in.

CHAPTER XIV.

How Einar's Battle-axe was Broken.

It will not take long to tell how I came there.

Pressing south under all sail, not daring to draw in even one stitch of canvas for the fierce storm that lashed the sea into fury and chilled us to the marrow with its icy breath, the *Long Dragon* made good speed. When we saw the *Garfreda* lying off Tvedestrof we thought at first that she was the *Eagle* we were pursuing; but to find Algar, with eighty warriors, was the next best thing. Even then we scarcely hoped to equal the number of men under Hrolf and Hardrada.

Though the storm still continued we both sped on towards Hrolf's lair, where we of Raven's-nest shrewdly suspected our quarry to be. Labouring and tossing through the angry sea, baling out the bilge water without cessation, we came in sight of Strongness Rock on the evening of the second day. We perceived it bulking dimly ahead in the last faint light of the west, and then the shroud of the night hid us.

We had much to do to keep from running ashore on the jutting crags at the base of the rock, but at last we found anchorage to the lee of it and got to land in the yolles. Algar's first intention was to take Thora with us to lull suspicion, but Othnar would not hear of it, and we left her tied fast to the mast of the *Garfreda*. We took every man from both ships and crept up the long hill to the homestead under cover of the darkness. What little noise we made was drowned by the shrieking of the gale round the promontory.

Unseen, unheard, we reached the red-lit house, from whence came snatches of songs and the clatter of daggers and dishes. All Strongness was at the feast, it seemed, and doubtless Astrid was Hardrada's wife by now, and Einar, perchance, had been sacrificed to Thor. We whispered our plan quickly, fiercely determining that if we were too late we would take a terrible vengeance. Algar, with a hundred men, went round to the back of the house; Othnar, with the others, gathered before the great door. Three men we sent to the cliff edge to make an end of the sentry by the beacon if there should be one, and to fire it, so that we might have light for our work after the first surprise.

I stood with Othnar, waiting the signal that Algar was ready, when Algar himself came along the side of the house struggling with a great, unarmed man. It was a desperate struggle while it lasted, and I know not how it would have been ended, but within a few moments of their appearance the red tongue of the beacon shot up into the black sky, and the men saw each other.

"You have a strange way of greeting a friend, Algar Erikson!" gasped Einar, letting go his hold. "It is almost as bad to fall into a friend's hands as into a foes, methinks, at night. But whom have we here, by all the gods?"

We told him quickly, and in turn he told us how the feast had gone. Then, not giving himself time to rest, so fired and strengthened was he by the thought that both Astrid and vengeance were his now, he seized a shield from one of the men, his own sword and axe and the charred axe-head of his father's from Algar, and bade me knock on the oaken door.

"If all goes well," cried he, "there will be another wedding feast before many days, and it will be mine. Thunder on the door, skald; 'tis cold waiting out here."

So I knocked, and heard Hardrada bid all strangers welcome, and went in, half-closing it behind me so that those who stood without might not be seen. The men turned in their seats and stared at me in amaze, the knives and cups falling from their hands, the jests and laughter dying away on their lips.

Astrid gave a cry of joy and half rose from the seat, but Hardrada and Alfdane, whose heads were near together, glanced at me fearfully. And while they sat and stared, each man with hand on weapon, I stepped forward.

"Surely, Hardrada Hardskull," cried I, "you have a word of welcome for me? It was ill of you not to bid me to your marriage—me, Sigmund the Skald, who has verses for any man's ear. Let me sing now."

And I sang them this song:

Light are the windows,
Ruddy the logs burn,
Full are the wine-cups
At the wedding of Astrid.
Hrolf's at the wedding—
Hrolf and Hardrada,
And Alfdane the Rat—
At the wedding of Astrid.
But lighter the windows
And redder the fire-glow,
When those not invited
Sit down at the feast board.
When Sigmund the Skald comes,
And Othnar, named Wolf'sfang,
And Einar the Wonder,
And Algar, and others!

As I shouted the last lines those I named burst into the room, and the feast became a fight that men shall remember while skalds sing.

First Einar came, with Erikson at his heels, and then Othnar Wolf'sfang, with Kolbi of Raven's-nest behind him.

"You thought not I had so many friends, Hardskull," cried Einar. "You thought not to bid me welcome in this fashion. Come down from the bride-seat, niddering, and let me send you to Hela; or, if you are timid, this will perchance give you courage. You will know where I found it."

And the blackened axe-head, with the piece of charred shaft yet in it, went whirling over the people straight to Hardrada. He saw it coming, and lowered his head to escape it as he sprang down, but it was cast with a true aim. The yet keen point struck the top of his skull with a dull ring, and, glancing off, was transfixed in the wood of the chair-back.

"You are well named Hardskull," said Einar. "That would have split most men's heads open. And now, Algar, leave him, and see to Hrolf Red-hand."

"That will I," said Algar. "As I sent his father's brother, Killing-Hakon, to Odin, so will I send him. It is ill to keep families apart. Here's a sword, Red-Hand; let us test its worth."

"If you want a sword testing, my own will do," said Hrolf, and as he spoke the two blades flashed and smote in the flickering light.

The fight was general now, and most of the house-folk had got their backs to the wall, for the men we had sent to the rear were now at the inner doors, and there was no escape. Yet our enemies were stronger in number than ourselves, and for a time held their own in the riotous confusion. The women fled out into the cold night, unheeded by any, and in the midst of a mad turmoil of overturned tables, spilt ale and wine, and a food-strewn floor, the axes rose and fell, the swords clashed and rang, the javelins and arrows hissed, and cries and oaths were as thick upon men's tongues as falling leaves in Valhambrosa.

Now Einar had cut his way through the press of the opponents with the flaming strokes of Longsword, and now he met Hardrada face to face. In the bride-seat sat Astrid,

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having no way to turn, but she sat without fear through the clamour and the rain of missles, because Einar was near her, and free once more. But he looked not at her as he rushed on Hardrada. He thought only of his father and mother and the blackened ashes of the stead at North-hold, and his passion was terrible to see. He shot Longsword back into its sheath, and drove Hardrada before him with the terrific blows of his great axe until the traitor came to the fire, and could retreat no further.

"Now, craven—niddering," cried Einar, "if there be any manliness in you, look to yourself. By Heindall, the old god, who can hear the grass grow and will hear my vow even if he be asleep, I will send you to Hela to-night—I will strike you down to its uttermost depths!"

Thus taunted, the traitor made some show of fight, and for a while their axes rang and clashed without advantage to either.

Not far from them the swords of Algar and Hrolf were flashing and striking, but Algar was the better man, and before Einar had done with Hardrada had sent Hrolf's sword spinning from his hand and beaten him down to his knees. Then, with a swift, downward thrust, he gave Red-Hand his bane. But no sooner was Algar recovered from the overbalancing of the winning-blow than Swerkur the Strong attacked him, and there was a struggle worth seeing. Othnar Wolf'sfang was busy keeping the door, and on all sides men were falling, and groaning, and dying.

Now Hardrada's time was come, and Einar pressed him hard. With one swinging stroke of the battle-axe he dashed the other's weapon from his hand, with another he broke his foe's right arm, with the third he struck Hardrada full upon the crown of the head. The red-stained axe-blade crashed through the hard skull, splitting it open to the chin, and with a shrill, unfinished cry of fear, Hardrada fell forward and was no more. But as the awful crash of the breaking of the skull rang through the tumult, the steel of the axe fell apart upon the floor, shivered in twain by the mightiness of the blow, and the shaft snapped off short. And I remembered then the runes that I had read on it at Raven's-nest.

Einar had taken but one step forward when a man with a winged helmet seized him by the throat.

Einar laughed, and, seizing Longsword again, joined in the common fray. The house-folk were beaten already, but fought doggedly, selling their lives dearly, and there was work for all weapons yet. On our side fell Unod and Jon, and Thorlak Astrison and Kolbi, four very good men; and of the enemy, Thorgrimur, and Arslaw, and Sigismund Sour-face, and Eric Longbow, and Coll the Wrestler, all men of note. Othnar had a flesh wound on his sword-arm, but he kept on.

Algar and Swerkur yet strove in the midspace, and so far neither had touched the other so well were they matched. As the fight died out as our foes were ended one by one, some of us formed a ring round the two.

At last Swerkur's sword slipped from his hand. He threw his shield in Algar's face and regained the blade, but Algar was upon him as he stooped to seize it, and his end seemed near. But at that moment Alfdane the Wereman threw from behind the bride-seat, where he had hidden, a javelin that caught Algar in the left side and proved instantly his death.

I saw the Wereman half rise from his hiding-place, and called out to Othnar Wolf'sfang, who was nearest, but Einar had seen the deed also. Before the cry had well escaped me, Longsword had risen and fallen, and the Wereman had received the reward of his treachery.

Swerkur was now fighting with Othnar, who was yielding slowly because of his wounded arm. Othnar was very glad to see Longsword coming to his rescue for the second time.

"You are a brave man, and a strong one, Swerkur," cried Einar, "but you will ride with the Valkyrs to-night," and the next fierce flash of the rune-written blade sent our last foe to Valhalla.

Now the fight was fought and won, and Einar rested on his sword awhile, listening to the noise of the wind outside. Then he said:

"It has been a fight such as few have seen, Skald, and will do for you to sing of when men are in their warlike moods, but I am glad that it is done. It has cost us dear, if only for the loss of Algar Erikson, and I am weary of slaughter and feud. Let us get away as soon as may be, for the moon should be up now, and the storm seems to abate. Nay, Othnar, we will not fire the house. I have no grudge against Hrolf's women-folk, and they will find it, even as it is, but a sorry biding place till dawn. And you, Astrid, come with me. I have won you at last, and none can part us, but we will fulfill the condition that your father laid upon me, if it be possible."

So we left the house, full of the dead and the dying and the wreckage of the feast, as it was, and by moonlight and the last flickering glare of the beacon on the cliff, went slowly down the hill to the ships. The *Long Dragon* we found easily, also where the *Vulture* and *Eagle* lay, but there was no sign of the *Garfreda*, except the broken end of the grapnel chain on the rock. Einar and Astrid glanced at each other, speaking not, and it was I who said:

"The storm-god has taken vengeance on the fey one, by the Tree Igdrasil! It is well when the gods take these things out of our hands."

Still they looked silently at each other; then Einar turned and bade the men place the body of Algar on a bier of shields upon the deck of the *Vulture* and set her alight and adrift. They obeyed in wordless sorrow, and presently the ship, aflame from stem to stern, moved out upon her

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last voyage. At first a waving sheet of fire, and then a glow of vivid redness, and last a leaping spark far out to sea, she sailed away.

Then we put what few were left of Borg's men on board the *Eagle*, and Einar bade them return to the Fareys as best they might, and that for the lost *Garfreda* Borg might keep the *Eagle*. After that had cleared the headland the rest of us boarded the *Long Dragon*, and sailed for Nidaros.

We found the *Destroyer* safe and taut and ready for sea, and forthwith, leaving Othnar to his own ship, we of Raven's-nest went on the swift galley and put her bow for home. Through storm and calm, with matchless speed, we held on. The ship walked the watery glades of the ocean as a living thing, and the ceaseless hissing of the spray at her prow was sweetest music in the ears of Einar and Astrid, who were ever together, and had now neither eyes nor ears beyond each other save for the swift way of the vessel. By day they watched the passing coast and counted the waves; by night they considered the stars.

The year wanted but one day to its completion since Einar had sailed away in the *Eagle* to fulfil his vow when the oars of the *Destroyer* rippled the water of the fiord, and she drove proudly up to the landing-stage, and Sweyn and Alfifa met us, and little Arvak—now grown a very sturdy youth in his own opinion—and Norri, and all the other folk who were able to walk.

There were tears and laughter, much talk and long silences, songs and feastings and great stir in the hall at Raven's-nest when Astrid came home again, and I told them how Einar had passed the fateful year, and never was known so great a wedding feast as that of Astrid and Einar Longsword. Folk came from long distances to see and hear of those who had done such deeds; and Othnar Wolf'sfang, having reached Raven's-nest in the *Long Dragon* by then, must needs invite himself to the merrymaking.

Men drank more than was good for them that day, and next morning there were many dull heads to go away through the snow. But there was talk of another feast soon, when Einar would be made Sweyn's house-man until Arvak should come of age, and as Othnar went down to his ship he was full of that.

"I shall not go on Viking cruise now," said he. "I have seen enough fighting for the season, and I will stay at home if only for another feast so glorious as this. I shall come early, have no fear, although it will not be by way of Saddle-back Ridge, as Sigmund came to Trollfell. But the wine and the merriment made me forget, Einar, what I heard at Tvedestrof where we touched coming up. They said that an old galley had been found wrecked on a rock near by, with the body of a dead woman bound to her broken mast. And the woman, they said, had been fair to look upon."

"The gods are stern," said Einar, looking at Astrid fondly. "But what is done we cannot undo; let us try to forget."

And the *Long Dragon*, amid many farewells and promises, sailed slowly up the fiord towards Trollfell, and we turned back to the warm house.

And this is the end of the saga of the wooing of Einar Longsword and Astrid the Beautiful.

The End.

Miss Emilia: "My sister fell and broke her limb."

Old Mr. Jones: "Which limb?"

Miss Emilia (blushing): "Well, if I must tell you, it was her left walker."

Jack Dashing: "She's the most uninteresting girl I ever met, though she is rich. She can't say anything but 'yes' and 'no.'"

Priscilla: "Which did she say to you?"

A six-year-old little fellow was forced to wear a shirt three sizes too large for him. After strutting about a little while, he burst out with:

"Mother, I feel awful lonely in this shirt!"

"Dear me," said the girl with black, snappy eyes; "I wish I was a football player!"

"What do you mean?" asked her mother, aghast.

"Just what I say. I wish I was a football player, and that hateful little Sallie Giggles was on the other side."

"I hear you intend naming your paper The Record, Faber?"

"I had thought of that name with favour, Pennibus."

"Don't do it, I implore you."

"Why?"

"The record is so easily broken now."

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CARE OF THE SKIN.

We wish to urge on all readers of this paper the extreme importance of having a healthy skin. If the pores are clogged, whether by the neglect of the ordinary rules of health, or by some skin disease, ill-health is sure to result. Apart from the unsightly appearance of an ever-present rash, the intolerable itching causes broken rest, and a variety of unpleasant symptoms.

ECZEMA.

The chief Skin Trouble to which the skin is liable is known as Eczema, which is merely a light-sounding name for a cold or catarrh affecting the skin. If Eczema is acute the part affected is red and hot, and burns and weeps. If it is a chronic variety, the surface is dry, often scaly, and there is great skin irritation.

Mr. Geo. C. Fellowes Simmons, of R.N.T. College, Devonport, writes: "The cure affected by your 'Antexema' was such that it has given me perfect faith in your remedy, and I am now taking your Blood Granules, which I only hope and believe will cure me internally as your 'Antexema' has cured the external eruption."

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Simple eczema of the legs is quickly removed by means of the "Antexema" treatment. For particulars see Page 11 of our Booklet.

Mrs. E. Cuffiin, of 10 Grove Street, Bedford Street, Leicester, writes: "I thank God and you for the relief I have got from your 'Antexema.' For two years I have suffered great pain in my legs. About two months ago they began to be rough and inflamed. Seeing your advt., I sent for a free sample, which I received from you the following day. By the time I had used the sample bottle of 'Antexema' my legs were healed."

INFANTILE ECZEMA.

Eczema affecting children is frequently caused by the use of strong soaps, and by wearing underclothing from which the soap or soda has been imperfectly removed. Fevers, teething, and a diet containing too much sugar are also said to be frequent causes.

Mr. Richard Bell, of 13 Spring Gardens, Hawthorne Avenue, Hull, writes: "Some seven weeks ago two of my children were attacked with infantile eczema. I was recommended to write for a sample of your 'Antexema,' which was quickly sent. I purchased a further supply, and in less than a fortnight my children were quite cured of the eczema."

ECZEMA OF THE HANDS.

With a little care it is not difficult to have nice hands. Do not wet them more than is absolutely necessary, and do not use strong acrid soaps. People who use their hands freely, as in nearly every trade, and especially those engaged in laundry work, always suffer more or less from hand troubles. "Antexema" is an excellent remedy for any form of eczema caused by the action of irritants, and it is an equally necessary household requisite to keep the skin in good condition, when red, rough, and dirty-looking.

Mrs. A. Chapman, of Riby, near Stallingboro', Lincs., writes: "'Antexema' is a wonderful specific for eczema. I had it in my hands, and after using a bottle of your 'Antexema' it disappeared."

Miss R. P. Dovey, of 234 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, writes: "'Antexema' is so good that she will always keep it for toilet use. She hopes this testimony will bring you many customers."

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The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 30th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 175.

Form a square word from words representing the following:

A POET; A LADY'S NAME; ANCIENT; ROWS; A HERB.

No. 176.

Eight letters respond to the quest
Of all for enjoyment athirst;
Two articles lead to the rest,
The last of the rest is the first.

No. 177.

I am composed of thirteen letters, and am a popular novelist of the day.

My 10, 3, 9, is a conveyance. My 12, 3, 13, 5, is to be conveyed. My 7, 5, 12, 5, is at this place. My 1, 11, 9, is an old woman. My 1, 5, 11, 4, is an important part of a man. My 6, 8, 2, 5, is precious. My 7, 11, 2, 13, is difficult to penetrate.

No. 178.

To choose my FIRST, a solemn rite;
Perennial joy, anxiety;
To ladies all a dear delight,
Ne'er followed by satiety.

To NEXT, a mystery it seems,
Such weight to FIRST attaches;
And, in his sleep, his troubled dreams
Take form of bills in batches.

Devoted to the arts of peace,
My WHOLE a learned doctor;
Or one who dreads, as thieves, police,
The unrelenting Proctor.

No. 179.

I am spelt in four letters, a very small word,
In which only three letters of them seem to be heard;
I dwell on the tree, on the bush, on the flower,
On the top of the cedar, the midst of the bower.
I am gold, I am silver, I am black, I'm white,
I am tinged with all colours you see 'neath the light;
I am thick, I am thin, I am narrow or broad,
I am met on the river, the meadow, the road.

No. 180.

An Asiatic country.
A Spanish river.
An Italian river.
A Russian province.
An American territory.
A Chinese city.

Initials and finals, read downwards, give the names of two cities of Europe.

It appears that the reply to Puzzle No. 126 was printed wrong. It should have been £4,270 instead of £490. Further awards have been made, and another £2 has been awarded this time to W. G. Hampson, 6 Norfolk Street, Hyde, Cheshire.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 148 to 155.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. E. England, of Tenby, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "Fortune's Footballs," by G. B. Burgin, has been sent to:

Miss A. Munro, Liverpool.
C. Dare, Birmingham.
W. A. Whitehead, Preston.
Miss B. Fry, Ryde, Isle of Wight.
G. Holyoake, South Kensington.
A. E. Thomas, Bristol.
E. C. Johnston, S. Wimbledon.
W. Anderson, Leytonstone.
W. H. Barrett, Birmingham.
H. G. Philpot, Sutton, Surrey.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 156 to 162.

No. 156. Poverty and incapacity are no sins.
No. 157. Being millionaires.
No. 158. Try to overcome evil inclinations.
No. 159. Nothing before honesty.
No. 160. Matrimony and Tennessee.
No. 161. Foreign coins.
No. 162. Some money over to use.

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